

Rowling: Boycott M&S over trans bra ‘horror’

Author attacks retailer as it continues to allow ‘biological males’ into female changing rooms

By Daniel Martin
DEPUTY POLITICAL EDITOR

JK ROWLING has called for a boycott of Marks and Spencer if the retailer continues to allow transgender women to access female changing rooms and offer to fit bras.

The Harry Potter author spoke out after *The Telegraph* revealed the retailer had apologised to a mother after a trans employee asked her teenage daughter if she needed any help in the bra section.

In a post on X, she said it was wrong that the store had “prioritised the wishes of men” by allowing the staff

member to approach the girl. “It’s time for women to vote with their wallets,” she said. “If stores like M&S continue to flout the Supreme Court ruling on women-only spaces, prioritising the wishes of men who want to undress near, or help fit bras on teenage girls, a boycott seems appropriate.”

While the retailer apologised for the incident, it made no promise that trans staff would be told not to approach teenage girls in the lingerie department.

In April, the Supreme Court ruled that the word sex in the Equality Act means biological sex, not self-identified gender.

It means services which are meant to be segregated by sex, such as toilets and changing rooms, must be done so on the basis of biological sex. In other words, transwomen should be excluded from women’s facilities.

The Telegraph revealed yesterday that a mother had complained that her

14-year-old daughter had felt uncomfortable when they were approached by a trans shop assistant in the lingerie area of the shop, where they were hoping to have a bra fitting.

Although the staff member was polite, the mother said she felt it was “completely inappropriate” for her daughter to be approached by a “biological male” in that section.

In a complaint to M&S, she said: “Imagine [my daughter’s] horror, then, when the person to approach us and ask if we needed help was a transgender ‘woman’, ie, a biological male.

“This is obviously the case: he is at least 6ft 2in tall... My daughter recoiled, so I politely declined the offer and we left immediately. She was visibly upset and said she felt ‘freaked out.’”

The following day, an M&S customer service assistant replied, apologising for the incident. “Thank you for reach-

ing out to us and sharing your experience,” the email said. “We deeply regret the distress your daughter felt during her visit to our store. We understand how important this milestone is for her, and we are truly sorry that it did not go as you had hoped.”

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J K Rowling criticised M&S



“significantly short of the response that was required to satisfy me that M&S takes seriously the safety and dignity of women and girls”.

She said that the retailer had acknowledged “this colleague is t this was “not offer just my : protection of pproached by

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clothing section as well as other parts of the shop and is not one of the staff who carry out bra fittings.

On Monday, an M&S spokesman said: “We want our stores to be inclusive and welcoming places for our colleagues and customers. We have written to this customer and explained that our colleagues typically work across all departments in our stores and customers can always ask to speak to the colleague they feel most comfortable with.”

Helen Joyce of women’s rights charity Sex Matters said: “As more women find the confidence to object, knowing they are backed by the law, we’re going to see more of this.

“For too long, businesses have prioritised the demands of trans-identifying men with little regard for the impact on everyone else.

“But now businesses will have to choose.”

British PoWs kept calm by carrying on, images reveal

By Telegraph Reporter

NEVER-before-seen photos taken by a British airman inside a German prisoner-of-war camp show how the officers kept up morale during the Second World War.

The black and white images show that the imprisoned men played games and staged theatre shows to beat the boredom – with some dressing up as women.

Other pictures show the captured RAF officers playing games of British bulldog within the barbed-wire confines. The playground game was taken so seriously that referees had to adjudicate.

The camp’s band were also a key part of the entertainment, as musicians are seen posing with their instruments.

The newly discovered photos were taken by an unknown British PoW at Stalag VIIIB, near the village of Lamdorf in south-west Poland. Prisoners were moved there from Stalag Luft III in Sagan, the *Great Escape* camp, which became overcrowded by 1943.

A PoW later recalled their first impressions of the Polish camp: “There, before our startled eyes, was the forbidding spectacle of Stalag VIIIB. It was gigantic. In the form of a square, each side measured about half a mile in length, with formidable double-banked barbed-wire fences and sentry boxes on stilts.

“Inside the perimeter were eight large compounds, four on each side of the central roadway. Each compound contained four long single-storey brick-built barracks, each accommodating 150 to 200 men in three-tier wooden bunks, with ablutions in the centre.

“All that could be seen through the wire was a thick pine forest to the east; a wide open plain to the north and west – away on the horizon, a small settlement could be made out – while many miles away to the south, a range of hills filled the skyline.”

In January 1945, the camp inhabitants were sent on a forced march westwards, which killed many of them.

The album has come to light eight decades on at auctioneers Sworders, of Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, with a £400 estimate. It is being sold on Aug 19.

The vendor, a private collector, bought it from a military fair 15 years ago, and it is being sold alongside a cigarette case that apparently belonged to the same PoW.



British prisoners of war at the Stalag VIIIB camp, in south-west Poland, put on theatre shows to stave off the boredom. The unseen photographs are being sold by Sworders, of Stansted Mountfitchet, on Aug 19

Talking therapy can help ease lower back pain, research finds

By Michael Searles
DEPUTY HEALTH EDITOR

A NEW form of talking therapy can help people with lower back pain to live a more active life, research has found.

Treatment options for chronic back pain have long been limited and offer only small, short-term benefits.

But experts believe they have found a “novel” approach to helping sufferers with a talking therapy that is focused on educating and improving activity levels, according to a study published in the *Lancet Rheumatology* journal. A trial

involving more than 1,000 people with lower back pain found that Cognitive Functional Therapy (CFT) improved quality of life and reduced the “disabling” effect of back pain.

The researchers, led by experts at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, found that CFT was more effective than the usual care given to back-pain sufferers and the benefits lasted for three years after treatment – when the study ended.

Typically, psychotherapists use talking therapies to help people with mental health conditions or emotional

issues. But there is now increasing evidence that it may be able to help people overcome pain or reduce their experience of it.

For some people, lower back pain is a one-off event that gets better with time, but for others it can become chronic and cause long-term issues, affecting their mental and physical health.

Most treatments for the condition have “small to moderate” effects that do not last for a long period of time, the experts said.

But CFT was used to “address the causal mechanisms” of chronic lower

back pain and help to change the way people think about and respond to pain.

Of the 1,000 patients from Australia, a third were given “usual care”, a third were given CFT and the final third were given CFT plus another technique known as biofeedback, which tries to teach a person to control automatic body functions.

People in the “usual care” category received a combination of pain medication, self-management tips and being encouraged to resume activities as soon as possible, including work.

Those receiving CFT had seven treat-

ment sessions over 12 weeks, plus a booster session at 26 weeks, which last between 30 and 60 minutes.

Some 300 people with an average age of 48 continued the study to the three-year follow-up point, split between each of the three groups.

The main measure of the study was to assess people’s activity levels at different intervals.

Researchers found that CFT, both alone and combined with biofeedback, was more effective than usual care in reducing “activity limitation” caused by lower back pain. The improvements in

activity levels among those who had undertaken the therapy grew over the first year and were still intact after three years, when the study ended.

There were no significant differences among patients who did and did not use biofeedback techniques, prompting researchers to say the use of biofeedback “did not add to effectiveness”.

The researchers, led by Prof Mark Hancock of Macquarie University, said: “These long-term effects are novel and provide the opportunity to markedly reduce the effect of chronic back pain if [CFT] can be widely implemented.”

Starmer’s council looks to go fully vegan after report into its ‘food mission’

By Aaron Newbury

A LABOUR-led council covering Sir Keir Starmer’s constituency could become fully vegan.

Camden council, in north London, commissioned a report that concluded a 100 per cent plant-based catering regime was “in line” with their “food mission”, according to the environmentalist group Plant Based Councils.

Under the plans, which the group expects to be formally incorporated next year, only plant-based food would be served at council-catered events and meetings. There is no expectation that Camden residents or workers at the local authority would be prohibited from eating meat.

But critics have claimed the local authority is “wasting vital time and resources ramming through a draconian ban on meat and dairy”.

Mo Metcalf-Fisher, director of external affairs at the Countryside Alliance,

said Camden “should instead be supporting our British farmers who produce some of the most sustainable food in the world, regardless of whether it’s meat, dairy or vegetables.”

Plant Based Councils has claimed credit for moving seven councils to a plant-based diet. Oxfordshire County Council, held by the Liberal Democrats, as well as Labour-held Calderdale and Exeter councils, have already committed to the move.

Kush Naker, a leading member of the Camden Plant-Based Councils campaign, described it as a “huge moment”, and said he was “thrilled that our council has shown real leadership.”

He added: “This policy isn’t about telling individuals what to eat. It’s about ensuring that our public institutions reflect the urgent need to shift toward sustainable, inclusive, and compassionate food systems.”

The campaign said in its announcement of the move that it “hopes Cam-

den’s bold move will inspire other councils across London and the London Assembly to follow suit.”

But the Countryside Alliance have claimed councils should be championing local sourcing and freedom of choice, instead of banning meat and dairy. A campaign led by the group has seen ten councils reject “compulsory veganism”.

So far Suffolk, Cornwall, Portsmouth, Fenland, Peterborough, the Highlands, Dorset, Wiltshire, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Rutland have all signed up to the alternative campaign.

Mr Metcalf-Fisher also said “the local MP and leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer, should clarify whether more Labour councils will be going vegan”.

A spokesman said: “Camden council has not agreed to a proposal to become vegan... We are looking at ways of moving towards serving more healthy, seasonal and locally grown food.



In the gods A short scion floatplane is the star attraction as Rochester Cathedral, in Kent, celebrates Medway’s aviation history. The plane was built yards away by the Short Brothers.