

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

There are two questions that stalk every political scandal.

Quite simple.

What did you know and when did you know it?

And those two questions today are so pertinent for the SMP who find themselves the subject of very unwelcome scrutiny after the arrest of the former chief executive and Nicola Sturgeon's husband yesterday and the ongoing police investigation at a time when the leadership contest was only announced a week or two earlier and was an incredibly tight result.

The SMP has been in the news a lot in the last month with Nicola Sturgeon's shock resignation which has been thrown into let's say a new light by these extraordinarily dramatic events that unfolded right at her house yesterday.

Police officers, investigation teams, detectives arriving really early 7.35 in the morning and within a few minutes erecting a rather strange and rather sinister blue evidence tent in their garden.

They then arrested her husband Peter Murrell who was until last month the chief executive for more than 20 years of the SMP and they took him for questioning for nearly 12 hours.

Welcome to The News Agents.

The News Agents.

It's John.

It's Emily and in a moment we'll be speaking to Stephen Flynn who is the SMP's leader in Westminster, a supporter of the First Minister Humza Youssef and we'll be asking him about who knew what when.

But first we're going to hear from Dan Whitehead.

He is with Sky and he's right on the scene outside Nicola Sturgeon's house reporting.

Well we're well into the second day of this investigation at the home of Nicola Sturgeon, the former First Minister and her husband Peter Murrell on this housing estate on the outskirts of Glasgow and there is really still a significant police presence at the property. In front of me I can see an evidence tent still in the garden, there is police tape around the property, police barriers I can see, two uniformed police in the back garden of their house.

The couple's electric car for instance is still plugged in and charging and the blinds and the curtains are all closed and I've counted around 20 officers, some plaincloth detectives, others in their uniforms coming and going from the property throughout the day.

They've reversed a van in to load the evidence so we can't see what if anything is being taken from the property as evidence.

See tomorrow of course was released without charge, Nicola Sturgeon said she will comply with the police if needed, we don't believe that has happened, neither of them have been seen but clearly at the couple's home here there is still a significant police investigation underway that shows no sign of ending soon.

That was Dan Whitehead from Sky reporting for the newsagents.

We're not going to dwell too much on what's going on in the police activity but what it says in a bigger political sense is the most important part.

One small detail that fascinated me was the political metaphor we often use is that someone knows where the bodies are buried, yesterday at their house police arrived with spades

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

and shovels as if they were digging for something, now what that can be one can only imagine. So it really is puzzling that but it is the political fallout that we need to come to because there are big questions about the SNP now.

Just before we leave that question of the blue tent behind we were talking to a former senior detective in the Met in London's police force who had headed up pretty big investigations and this is very much him speaking off the record, he says they must have had a very strong lead that there was something in that garden that is crucial to the case and this is a direct quote, it is not the normal course of events to go in and put a tent up unless you believe that is what is underneath it or in the garden or area needs preserving as a crime scene and is crucial to a possible crime and crucial to the investigation.

Now I know we kind of know that, you know you wouldn't put up a tent unless you were going to dig or excavate or anything but it's still quite extraordinary hearing those words from a senior former Met detective saying most times a tent is up for excavation it's because something needs preserving.

In other words they've got the spade they're excavating, if it was something they could take away they would have taken it away, if it was something they could put into a blue bin bag they would have put it into a blue bin bag and taken it away.

There is something there in the garden that they do not want to leave there without checking because it is part of what is now a crime scene.

And it seems surreal to be sitting here with each other talking about this when it was only a few weeks ago where Nicola Sturgeon announced her resignation and there was total shock and disbelief that this had come what seemed to be so clearly out of the blue and today you're starting to think well was it as out of the blue as it seemed did they know that the police investigation was reaching a critical mass and that it could soon lead to the arrest of her husband.

And these are the questions and did the police delay the arrest until after the leadership election result was in and if that's the case then if you're Kate Forbes who narrowly lost to Humza Youssef you're thinking that result could have been very very different if I wasn't the establishment candidate in that race.

I know you've had a lot of America this week but boy did I get James Comey flashbacks when I saw this and I'll show you with the same James Comey was the head of the FBI at a time when he had discovered evidence on Hillary Clinton's laptops just a month out from the 2016 election and he had to decide whether he made that known to the voting public of America or whether he concealed it and I interviewed him at the time and he said there was basically the option between terrible and even worse.

We went for terrible which was telling people what we were doing because even worse would have been concealing and actually both sides ended up hating him.

Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton have never spoken to him again because they find what he did despicable and think it threw her off winning the 2016 election and Donald Trump fired him shortly afterwards when he was doing a walkabout of the FBI in a Southern American state and so you end up in this perilous position where whatever choice you make is going to be the wrong one.

You can understand if the police had brought it forward of course Humza Yousef would have

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

been saying you've made it impossible for the succession candidate to ever take on that role and lead the SMP.

So either way they were in a bind but what we don't yet know is exactly who told the police what or who asked the police what or whether the police just went on completely their own timetable.

So the police issued a statement last night which was interesting because it said we didn't give anyone forewarning of the fact that we were going to raid their house and raid SMP headquarters but they don't ask the question whether anyone had asked them to delay their activities until such time as the leadership contest was over.

I wonder whether it's worth just doing a quick timeline of how we've got to hear because July 2021 Police Scotland launched an investigation into potential criminality on SMP fundraising and the claim is that around £600,000 was raised post 2017 for a second independence referendum but that money was spent on other things and Peter Murrell the SMP Chief Executive husband of Nicola Sturgeon has to make a loan to the party of £107,000 because the party had a cash flow problem.

Nicola Sturgeon at that time said I can't recall when I learned about that loan and insisted that it came from her husband's own resources and then police then launched Operation Branch Form after a number of criminal complaints are made to the police about SMP activities and then you get to this year with Nicola Sturgeon at the beginning of the year saying I've got plenty more in the tank I'm not going anywhere and then her resignation.

Yeah, I mean essentially this started when Nicola Sturgeon was meant to be calling Indiref to they needed to raise a million pounds.

They only raised about £600,000 of that and then Indiref to never happen.

So there are question marks over where the money went, how it disappeared, was it spent on other things and would that be compromising people who had essentially given into the fund but I guess the question is right now how many people in the SMP or maybe in Scotland as a whole are furious with this turn of events and the timing and certainly I've heard from one who I would say is probably on the Kate Forbes wing of the SMP and they basically said they probably paused the police for the leadership election which raises questions itself and I asked how Kate Forbes would be feeling and they said well I'm not sure but I imagine the wider membership feel they voted whilst not in possession of all the information.

Now that is critical because the one thing you ask for is that you're voting on the facts of the time and if those have been concealed from you why wouldn't Kate Forbes or any of her supporters be saying hang on this actually nullifies the results of the SMP leadership election?

Well it is so fascinating that this has to be unpacked you've put your finger on the absolute key question there about if you're a supporter of Kate Forbes don't you want to cry foul at this point and say this election was held under slightly false pretenses if the leadership knew that arrests were imminent in this whole investigation by Police Scotland and it was interesting that after Nicola Sturgeon announced that she was going to resign she did an interview with Skye's political editor Beth Rigby where Beth raised this issue. There's also an ongoing police investigation to use the funds we wouldn't expect you to comment on that but there's a suggestion you and your husband will be interviewed have

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

you heard anything on that?

No but I am not going to comment on I wouldn't comment on any ongoing police investigation and I'm not going to comment on this one.

So you haven't heard but it must have been put pressure on you and your husband hand on heart did this play any part in your departure and your decision?

No.

It hasn't no played no part in her decision you kind of look at that today given what has unfolded in the past 24-48 hours and you kind of think really?

And I remember that very clearly it was a Wednesday of half term when we were all taken by surprise I think you were in Australia with the grandchildren or perhaps appearing on some very high-polluting Australian TV show.

You had to get that in.

Just dropped it in in case people had missed it the first 16 times round and I remember because it sort of took us by surprise it happened on the Wednesday but it shouldn't really have been that much of a surprise because when we started digging it transpired that just two days earlier new questions had started to be raised about that repayment that Peter Murrell had made to the Indiref 2 fund and it all seemed to be getting a little bit murkier and I remember that Sturgeon stood up and she made a really good really humane case you know for wanting to spend more time having coffee with her mates and wanting to spend more time with her nephews and nieces and saying that it was not right that any one individual should be dominant in the system for too long and she'd spent her entire adult life in politics and wanted to go off and do other things.

It was all pretty convincing you add into that the troubles she'd had trying to get through the gender recognition bill and we thought it was something much more specifically political at the time.

In this context just seven weeks later it all seems too coincidental not to be tied to the whole question of cash.

I think that if you are a journalist or someone interested in politics when you hear the line I want to spend more time with my family you should be rather sceptical and so it has proved but now I'm glad to say that we are joined by Stephen Flynn MP, leader of the SNP at Westminster.

Stephen thank you so much for doing this and for being with us.

It really has been a bloody awful time for the SNP hasn't it these past couple of weeks?

I think that's one way of putting it it's been tough to say the least I think a lot of us and I'm a member like everyone else I've grown up within the party as an activist as a councillor and now of course as an MP and the group leader at Westminster and yeah it's hard not to feel a little bit scurned by some of the developments that have happened in recent times.

We came through the leadership contest which was obviously quite robust at certain points I think it's fair to say I think we got ourselves into a good place I've been very very impressed by Humza he's talking about all the right things doing all the right things I've been fortunate to spend a fair bit of time with him as well and being really impressed by him and of course events of recent era are completely out with his control with my control. Out of your control but you must have had an idea they were coming and coming soon and

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

Nicola Sturgeon the same?

I mean I did we knew there was an investigation underway everyone read that in the papers but I dropped my kids off at nursery yesterday and was walking my dog and got a message saying look at your phone I was completely oblivious of that happening as I'm sure all of us were.

And do you think Nicola Sturgeon and Peter Marlow knew that this was happening?

No and there's been nothing to indicate otherwise that I've seen there's been a few mischievous characters which suggested that there's been some forewarning of the like I've got obviously no insight into that but I've not seen anything to suggest that there has been.

Stephen can you categorically rule out that she knew this was coming when it did?

I'm not in a position to categorically rule out anything because I'm not privy to all the information that's gone from five if there has been any information at all that's gone between anyone but I'm not going to take it out of face value because I think that's the right thing to do.

I have a lot of trust and faith in our police services I've got a lot of trust and faith in Nicola so there's nothing that indicates to me that there's anything untoward here whatsoever.

Do you know if anyone at the top of the SNP or anyone in leadership positions suggested to the police that they delay their arrest and their investigation until after the leadership election?

Genuinely I'm being honest here because I think it's important to be as honest and candid as I possibly can be.

As I say this struck me as a total surprise yesterday I was in the middle of just doing the things that all of us do in the morning and I got a message on my phone saying look what's happening outside the front of Nicola and Pierce House.

If it transpires, if it emerges that that did happen what would be your response?

I mean that's a fairly significant if and I think it would be a myth of me to suggest that there's any indication of anything untoward here.

I think the police need to be able to go through that process in the right way and we'll all see what the outcome is in the film at the time.

Of course and there's limited amounts you can say given the police investigation I'm not asking you to go into any of that territory but if there had been communication to delay an arrest until after the leadership contest isn't there a question over how fair that contest was when Humza Youssef is seen as the establishment candidate and he wins by a way for thin majority over Kate Forbes and won't some people say this election needs to be rerun?

So your question there John if I may is predicated on a significant if and as I see it and as I understand it there's nothing to indicate that that has been the case or is the case.

But just engage me on the but if if my supposition is correct would it cast a question mark over the election result?

If you forgive me I don't think it's fair to answer a question on the basis of a fairly significant if when there's no there's no material evidence I can see in the public the main which would indicate that has been the case now that had been the case I've obviously been very worrying for a number of reasons but you know the contest everyone knew where Humza stood everyone knew Kate stood and Humza came out on top and was now

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

focusing on the big issues that matter to people in Scotland.

Stephen we're going to take the if out completely this is from one of your S&P colleagues who said to me they probably did pause for the leadership election which raises questions itself and I imagine the wider membership feel they voted whilst not in possession of all the info.

So you have got colleagues in your party who believe that the election was not really fairly fought.

I guess what I would say in that regard Emily is that if a colleague has evidence to that effect they should probably bring it forward because that's a much much bigger deal than simply a relative to a leadership contest and that leadership contest went over many weeks there was lots of issues debated and discussing everyone knew Kate.

To be fair it was a pretty truncated leadership election I know the last time you ran one was more than three months this one was sewn up in around a month I mean if Kate Forbes now says hang on this should be null and void she'd have a point wouldn't she.

I think all I've heard from Kate on the back of the outcome is that she was fairly behind the process and supported by HQs throughout that process as well in a positive way.

So she's happy is she?

She's happy with all this.

But I've not spoken to Kate in the last couple of days but I can only take from her public comments in recent times what her views were in relation to the contest and the fairness of the contest.

Now there's people who think contest should have been shorter, should have been longer and the party's democratically elected body then EC came to a conclusion in relation to that I wasn't surprised it was it was a short contest now.

But just if we're talking about the perception I mean Hamza Youssef has literally been First Minister for a week I mean it's just over a week and a week after he's got his feet under the table and into the job the person he took over from has her house searched and her husband is arrested Hamza Youssef is the succession candidate to Nicola Sturgeon and just a week after he's got this all sewn up her husband's under arrest and the house has got a blue tent in the garden.

I mean come on that's looking pretty weird isn't it?

I'm not going to sit here and try and explain that is not looking probably a bit bizarre to some people but I'm being candid as I possibly can.

There's nothing that's been put to me which would suggest that anything untoward has happened and if something untoward has happened then of course that's a much bigger issue than anything to do as a leadership contest and I'm sure of anyone who is making these claims or suggestions has evidence to that effect they should bring it forward into the public domain because having a debate about ifs or supposition isn't really the best quality of debate when we're talking about something which is a pretty serious matter by all accounts and of course it is relevant to the Government Party of Scotland and I think what the public expect of us as parliamentarians on the back of what happened and as a party on the back of what happened in the leadership contest is to be focusing on cost of living crisis, the economy, the health service and indeed the constitution and that's where my focus is and I know that's where Humza's focus is and hopefully we can get back onto that.

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

And you want to discuss the big policies.

My mind goes back to sort of Labour 2015 and they are absolutely eviscerated in the election they were seen as the rotten establishment of Scotland.

And some of the same whiff now attaching to the SNP, dodgy financial deals, loans, money going missing, arrests taking place, it's pretty awful.

Trust in politics is probably the most important thing and I think all of us understand particularly those of us who've been a Westminster in recent times how fragile that trust is in politicians and I don't think we can escape from that.

I was heartened yesterday on the back of a really robust leadership contest, there was a poll landed last night from Salvation which still had the SNP, I think it was either eight or nine points ahead of the Labour Party and that's because over the course of the last 16 years we've built up that trust.

And would you feel confident those would be the numbers next week?

Well obviously, I would be surprised if there wasn't perhaps some sort of residual impact as a result of this but it's for us as politicians, it's for us as a party to be in a situation where we can rebuild any trust that's been lost with the public.

A senior detective in the Met told us that you'd only erect a blue evidence tent if there was something buried in the garden, that something is being excavated.

I'm not expecting you to talk about the investigation itself but is your sense that the process is fair and justified or does this feel pretty heavy handed?

I don't know if it feels or looks or is anything heavy handed because I don't know what the police are looking for, I don't really know what they're doing, that's for them to decide whether their actions are warranted or not and to be honest with you it came as a little bit of a shock to see those images because I think we all associate police tents with forensic activities and they're like, I don't know what the police are doing, I don't know what they're looking for, I don't know what they've found of anything, it's all guess work at this stage so you'll have to forgive me for being as candid as I can here but I don't have a huge amount to add in relation to that and I think it would be unfortunate for any politician to suggest otherwise at this point the police should just be able to get on with what they need to do and us as politicians should be focusing on the issues that matter to the public.

And do you still believe in your heart 100% that Nicola Sturgeon's resignation had nothing whatsoever to do with the financial investigation going on into the SMP which we knew about?

Nicola built up a level of trust and rapport not just with party members, just with colleagues like myself but with the public in Scotland by being pretty honest and upfront and forthright with her when she needed to be, she said the good things and the bad things, there's nothing that I have seen or heard which would intimate that Nicola wasn't being open and upfront about her reasons for standing down, I obviously can't speak for Nicola but I don't have any reason to doubt Nicola Sturgeon given her track record.

Not even a blue tent in the garden?

Well I mean, it's hard to get the imagery of that tent out of your mind doesn't it?

But again I don't know what it is the police are actually doing or looking for so it's hard to put any of that together and a lot of the question there is predicated on Nicola knowing as well which like to all intents and purposes, no these, apart from some former

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

colleagues in the press and there must have been something here, there's no evidence of anything and that's the danger with these things isn't it?

They grow arms and legs and people throw opinions into the sphere when a lot of it is, we're just trying to fill a void, let the police get on with our work and if they find something that's untoward then there we go.

Yeah, fair enough.

Stephen, thank you very much indeed, happy Easter, have a good weekend.

Yeah, being great to have you on.

Thank you so much.

Thank you.

Well I have to say he's either very candid or he's very good at his job because there was a sort of wry smile throughout that last answer which is like I don't bloody know.

I wish I did.

Or maybe I'm glad I don't.

Or maybe I'm glad I don't know, yeah exactly.

Credit to him, kudos to him for coming to the wicket because it would be easy for an awful lot of politicians and I think an awful lot of politicians would have said oh there's a police investigation I can't possibly talk and he was prepared to consider to some extent what the political ramifications could be of this police inquiry.

Coming up, we're going to be talking about a subject that John Sopel can't wait to get his teeth into.

E-scooters.

E-scooters.

E-scooters, bloody running you over, knocking you down, going too fast, dangerous on the roads.

Yeah.

That's coming up.

This is The News Agents.

Welcome back.

We're going to take you to a totally different story now on the streets.

This is a story on the street and we're going to start on the streets of Paris where they've had a referendum asking Parisians if they like e-scooters and 90% that is massive, 90% of Parisians have said they want to see e-scooters banned from Paris.

So we wondered what we think about them here and we found one person who really, really hates them.

In Washington, there were e-scooters everywhere and when I say everywhere, in the canals, rivers, footpaths, at junctions where you were meant to cross the road, you were picking your way over them carefully, delicately.

If you were blind, tough, if you were disabled and in a wheelchair, tough.

And there were real problems that it wasn't just a means of transport, they were a source of city litter.

The person you're hearing going, yeah, to all of that is Will Norman, he's the Mayor of London's walking and cycling commissioner.

What do you say to that?



## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

Well, I'd agree with you.

I'd agree with you completely.

I remember seeing Washington, the same thing happened in San Francisco, you saw Paris to begin with, these new technologies arrived and they were just all over the pavements. They were scattered everywhere.

If you had a pram, if you had a push chair, as you said, if you had visual impairments, if you're walking your dog, it basically turned pavements into an obstacle course.

And I think that was one of the huge problems that cities faced.

Then all of these just have landed on cities without a huge amount of notice.

In London, we've sort of taken quite a different approach.

So if you look at the ones in London, we've worked with bits of the city and councils, et cetera, to sort of find designated parking spaces and they've got sort of, they use GPS and these wonderful gadgets, say, well, you can only really park your scooter there rather than scattering them all over the pavements.

But Will, when you look at this number from Paris, right, this was the vote, 90 per cent of votes cast support a ban.

Now I know you'll say Paris is very different to London for the reasons you've given, but it does seem as if we're moving further away from them, not towards.

I mean, they were, they were a pioneer, Paris, you know, they were introduced in 2018. And since then, they seem to have shrunk in popularity, more accidents, what was it, 459 injuries and three deaths.

I wonder whether the more people see scooters, the more they're moving away from them.

So I think, as I said, when these things descend without any regulations, any sort of systematic approach to actually how you manage them.

They were a real problem and they didn't have, Paris didn't have that, they had over ten operators arrive, they didn't have any parking restrictions and that's where the problems began in Paris.

I'm not surprised people were annoyed with them because I would have been, if they were scattered all over my pavement, that would have been a nightmare of getting around.

So give us the number of injuries and deaths in this?

So in London where we've been running our trial, we've been running since 2021, we've had about two and a quarter million hires, we've got about four and a half thousand e-scooters, rental e-scooters on the streets and so far, there's always a risk involved in transport.

We haven't had any fatalities associated with the rental trials and I very much hope that continues.

Because I think the point is-

You don't know about injuries?

I don't know, I think there have been 25 serious injuries over that period.

It was the last figure that I got that was about probably a few weeks old.

Now, there's always risk with transport, whether you take a push-by walk or you take the bus.

So there's always some risk.

But I think what our trial shows is you can make these safer if you cap the speed limits.

So in London we've got 25 and a half miles an hour, sorry, 12 and a half miles an hour

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

is the sort of the top speed, 25 be far too much.

But I think this is part of the problem, they're two types of e-scooters, they're the rental ones that Paris are talking about.

But they're also all the private ones, which you can buy from a shop.

And I was watching the Met Police the other day, they showed me a little thing on their dashcam footage and they were driving down the A12 50 miles an hour in their cop car and down the side of them came an e-scooter, you could buy one that could do 50 miles an hour.

Now, for me, that's insane.

And you're not allowed to do that, that's illegal.

At the moment, under the current regulations, it is illegal to buy these private e-scooters. There are no regulations over speed, brakes, lights, size of wheels, because there is no vehicle regulations by government.

So you can buy them, but you can't use them illegally on the road.

Which is just the confusing bit here, and most customers are unaware of that.

The other aspect of this is that they've got very little tiny wheels.

We have talked on this podcast before about the number of potholes there are in the United Kingdom and there are huge numbers of them.

If you hit a pothole on an e-scooter, you are going to go flying.

So they do present more of a risk, whereas you are not required to wear any kind of protective headgear.

And it seems to me that if you're driving a 50cc motorbike, that would require you to wear a helmet, which would probably wouldn't be able to get up to above 30 miles an hour. Whereas this example you gave on the A12 of one of them being able to do more than 50, don't you need to have more safety regulation in place?

Yeah, I think that's exactly what's needed.

So where we've done the trial in London, we brought in those safety regulations and it's shown that it's safer.

What needs to happen is at a government level, because this is a classic example where new technologies come in and regulations lag behind the new technologies.

And what we need at a national level is saying, right, e-scooters should be limited at this size.

You're right about wheel size.

Some of these things are so small, if you hit a dried up bit of chewing gum, you know, you might fall off a little old pothole.

So you need regulations on the size of the wheels, the balance, even the sort of material of the wheels.

And you're right, looking, well, what should people wear while they're driving these new type of vehicles?

Well, how much does this tie in to the overall idea of the 15 minute city?

In other words, that people should be able to live, work, socialize without taking their cars in the middle of the city, without big traffic jams, basically on foot, on bike, on scooter.

So that everything is within 15 minutes of it.

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

Everything is within 15 minutes in your life.

So I think, you know, the 15 minute city gets talked about a lot.

It's a planning concept that's been around for decades.

What we're trying to do in London is like, actually, how do we build a city that people want to live in?

That's healthy, that's got clean air to breathe, that hasn't got congestion, that's safe on the streets.

Exactly.

That's what the mayor and I want to do.

Now, the key way of actually reducing the amount of congestion is offering people safe alternatives to the car.

Two thirds of all car journeys in London could be walk, cycled or scooted in under 20 minutes.

Now that's not me saying all of them should be.

If you're disabled or if you're going to, I don't know, be in queue and picking up some patio, a car would be a better bet for that.

But a lot of those journeys could be made by other alternatives.

And that's why I think e-scooters do have a role to play in the city, as long as they're well managed and it's done properly.

But round where I live, they're introducing low traffic neighbourhoods.

There's been a huge increase in the number of cycle lanes.

Great reduction in the number of parking places and local businesses are suffering because they are not getting passing trade because there is nowhere to park.

I know someone who's opened a restaurant and they've put in the cycle lane.

There is nowhere nearby that anyone can park if they want to go to the restaurant and that is crippling trade.

Why?

You can go to a restaurant on a bike though.

Yeah, but it's an evening and it's a wet evening and they want to go in the car and there is nowhere now to park the car because there are cycle lanes, then it just deters people from going out.

So we've done quite a lot of work looking at this in terms of, well, what's the impact on, we do a lot of work looking at safety, we look at motor transport and health, etc.

But also on businesses, you're right, this is really important.

The studies that we've done in London show that where you've got areas that are more walkable, more cycleable, you've had a 40% increase in footfall and shops and on trade.

There are streets now which previously had empty retail units that are now part of those low traffic neighbourhoods that for the first time in living memory haven't had an empty retail outlet.

And the reason is that if you're going to a specific restaurant, then you'll find a parking space on top.

But it's the dropping in.

Very often when you're driving, stopping up and thinking, oh, I just buy a quick cup of coffee.

No, I won't do that because I've got to find a parking space, I've got to.

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

But actually, if you're walking past, whether you're cycling or walking, stop in, you buy one.

And so what we find is over a period of a month, the trade and the footfall increases and we've seen that in all sorts of things.

It's also replicated, you mentioned the US, the same thing in New York, same thing in European cities.

But where you've got streets for people, where it's safe to walk and cycle, people end up spending money on it.

But that's the point, isn't it, Will, that when you talk about streets for people, the scooter doesn't make it feel like the streets are for people.

It makes it feel like the streets are for scooters.

And if you get in the way of a scooter, woe betide you.

That's right.

These things shouldn't be on the pavement.

In my head, it's very clear, they're finding cycle lanes, they're finding the roads.

You're right, John, that we need to make sure that the surface is on the road is safe.

So what would you say to somebody?

If they saw somebody scooting on the pavement, would you say take that person on and tell them to get off the pavement?

I have done.

I can't do it all the time.

But I have done just saying, look, this is really anti-social, they're kids here.

Pedestrians should do that.

I'm not advocating everybody should.

If people feel comfortable, they should.

But ultimately, this is an issue for proper regulations for this mode of transport, which we just don't have at the moment.

Yeah.

Well, I just wonder, I mean, you're talking about London and maybe people outside of London listening to this.

When I say the Akron Yulez won't know what the hell I'm talking about, but an ultra low emission zone, do you think you've reached the point where the perception of you being anti-car has reached a tipping point and you can't go much further?

Because the protests against the ultra low emission zones and people are unable to use their cars because they may be too old, is so upsetting to people that you are losing support now as a result of it.

Well, one, this is not an anti-car agenda with you, Lays, you know, you can think it is.

It is.

It is.

You want people driving less.

You want people in their cars less.

You want people on foot and on cycles more.

And you are introducing the policies that make it more difficult.

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?

So in London, we have designed our city around the car for decades.

And lo and behold, what we've got are more car journeys that result in the congestion, that result in 4,000 people dying prematurely just because of the air they breathe, that result in over 3,000 people being hit on the roads and seriously injured or killed every year on the streets.

We need to change that because where that happens, it makes the city successful.

People want to live in places where their kids can walk to school.

They can cycle to school.

They can walk to the shops.

We know that that's good for the city, that's good for our success, that's good for investment.

Now that is not saying people shouldn't use their cars.

What we need are fewer cars on our streets, everywhere around the world is looking at.

Those cars that we should have, should have and we need, need to be cleaner.

We have a role for electric vehicles, we have a role for cleaner combustion engines.

We need vans, we need trucks to bring stuff in because we're a functioning, vibrant city.

But what I'm saying is if two thirds of all the journeys in London could be walked and cycled in less than 20 minutes, that's a massive potential to take some of those vehicles off the street by walking, cycling, scooting, etc., public transport, and that would actually free up more space on the roads for those people who do have to use those vehicles to get around.

Well Norman, great to have you in here.

Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Thank you.

This is The News Agents.

Before we go, a little Donald Trump update because of course we did two episodes on the kind of extraordinary scenes that unfolded in Manhattan and then Mar-a-Lago and do listen to those because I think it was a really fascinating piece of American history.

But Mike Pence, who was the vice president to Donald Trump, has decided he's not going to appeal against being forced to give evidence to the January the 6th investigation into what happened and that is really significant because for the first time, Mike Pence, who was up at the Capitol when the riot ensued, is going to give evidence about what he thought Donald Trump did and didn't do and that legal investigation seems to me to have much more potency to it than whether or not he paid off Stormy Daniels and how and why.

Mike Pence, such a fascinating character.

Throughout the four years of the Trump presidency, he was quietly loyal, never really raised an eyebrow, was always the one calming things down at Trump's side when he was the vice president and on that night, on that day in the Capitol, there were chance for hang Mike Pence.

He and his family were actually cowering inside cupboards under tables trying to avoid having their lives taken by the marauding crowd of protesters who wanted to overthrow the results of the 2020 election and thought that the vice president wasn't on the same side as Donald Trump and in the ensuing year, he said very little about that whole time.

He was really tight lipped and it seemed as if he was going to sort of carry this away

**[Transcript] The News Agents / Why are the police digging up Nicola Sturgeon's garden?**

with him and his loyalty and then he brought out a book and he started doing interviews and he seemed to be getting a little bit more prepared to say this and now we are looking at him as a potential candidate in the 2024 presidential election, i.e. taking on Donald Trump and you have to say, well, maybe this is a political move on his part because he's now separating himself from the former president or maybe he just thinks he's doing the right thing and justice must be served.

It's going to be fascinating.

We will be back on Tuesday, whether you're celebrating Easter, Passover, Ramadan, have a lovely weekend and we'll see you then.

Bye.

This has been a Global Player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.