

JK Rowling reveals she survived sex assault and domestic abuse

By Jack McGregor

JK Rowling has revealed she was motivated to speak out about transgender issues because of her experience of domestic abuse and sexual assault.

The disclosure came as the Harry Potter author, 54, responded to criticism surrounding her comments in a lengthy blog post on her website.

In the post, she detailed five reasons she felt the need to talk about the issue – including her interest in “both education and safeguarding” and “freedom of speech”.

Explaining her final reason, she wrote: “I’ve been in the public eye now for over 20 years and have never talked publicly about being a domestic abuse and sexual assault survivor.

“This isn’t because I’m ashamed those things happened to me, but because they’re traumatic to revisit and remember.

“I also feel protective of my daughter from my first marriage. I didn’t want to claim sole ownership of a story that belongs to her, too.

“However, a short while ago, I asked her how she’d feel if I were publicly honest about that part of my life and she encouraged me to go ahead.

“I’m mentioning these things now not in an attempt to garner sympathy, but out of solidarity with the huge numbers of women who have histories like mine, who’ve been slurred as bigots for having concerns around single-sex spaces.”

Daniel Radcliffe, the star of the Harry Potter film series, and Eddie Redmayne, who leads the cast of *Fantastic Beasts*, have both criticised Rowling for her comments about transgender issues.

Last weekend, Rowling took issue with a headline on an online article discussing “people who menstruate”, and said: “I’m sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?”

And in December last year she voiced her support for a researcher who was sacked after tweeting that transgender people cannot change their biological sex. Critics accused her of being transphobic, an allegation Rowling strongly denies.

In the blog post, Rowling also said she was motivated to address transgender issues via her Twitter account because of what she sees as an increasingly misogynistic society.

“We’re living through the most misogynistic period I’ve experienced,” she continued.

“Back in the 80s, I imagined that my future daughters, should I have any, would have it far better than I ever did, but between the backlash against feminism and a porn-saturated online culture, I believe things have got significantly worse for girls.

“Never have I seen women denigrated and dehumanised to the extent they are now.

“From the leader of the free world’s long history of sexual assault accusations and his proud boast of ‘grabbing them by the pussy’, to the incel (‘involuntarily celibate’) movement that rages against women who won’t give them sex, to the trans activists who declare that TERFs need punching and re-educating, men across the political spectrum seem to agree: women are asking for trouble.

“Everywhere, women are being told to shut up and sit down, or else.”

Rowling said she had felt “mentally sexless” as a girl growing up in

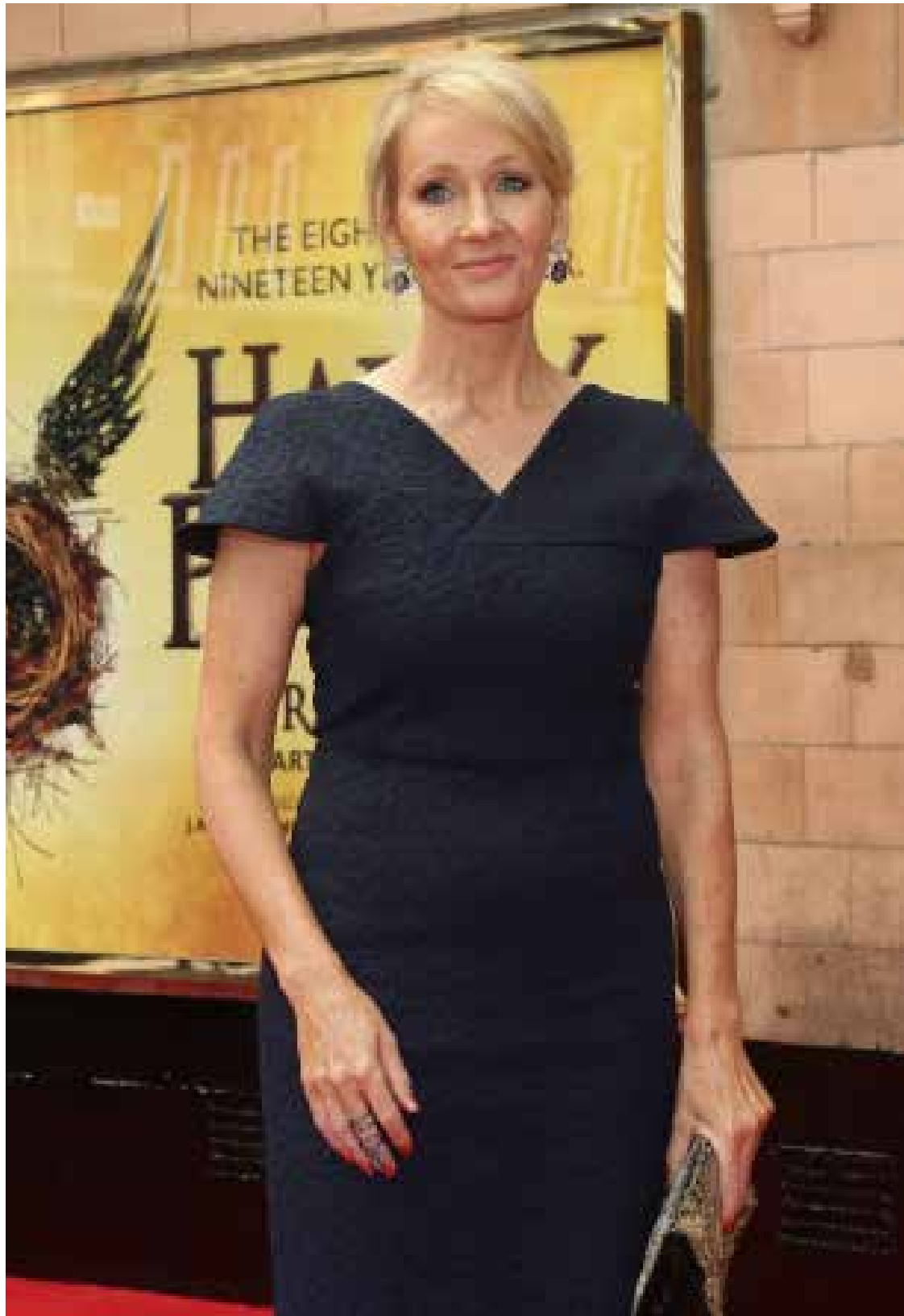
“I’m mentioning these things... out of solidarity with women who have histories like mine

Gloucestershire, which had prompted her to develop mental health issues.

She wrote: “When I read about the theory of gender identity, I remember how mentally sexless I felt in youth.”

Rowling said she had been influenced by Colette and Simone de Beauvoir’s views of gender during this period. She added: “As I didn’t have a realistic possibility of becoming a man back in the 1980s, it had to be books and music that got me through both my mental health issues and the sexualised scrutiny and judgment that sets so many girls to war against their bodies in their teens.

“Fortunately for me, I found my own sense of otherness, and my ambivalence about being a woman, reflected in the work of female writers and musicians who reassured me that, in spite of everything a sexist world tries to throw at the female-bodied, it’s fine not to feel pink, frilly and compliant inside your own head.”



JK Rowling posted: ‘We’re living through the most misogynistic period I’ve experienced’

London by train in 3 hours ‘possible’

THREE-HOUR train journeys from London to Glasgow and Edinburgh would be possible under a plan for better links between HS2 and Scotland, rail industry firms have claimed.

A report by High Speed Rail Group called for a programme of investment to upgrade existing lines and build new sections of track to improve cross-border connectivity.

It did not provide an estimated cost, but insisted there is a “sound economic case” for encouraging people to switch from air travel to rail.

The fastest train services currently take around four hours and 30 minutes for London to Glasgow and four hours and 20 minutes for London to Edinburgh.

The report, entitled *High-Speed Rail and Scotland*, stated that three-hour journeys on both routes are possible if the measures it recommends are implemented.

HS2 is planned to initially run between London and Birmingham, before being extended to Crewe, Manchester and Leeds, but high-speed trains will also serve destinations on conventional lines.

The firm developing the railway, HS2 Ltd, estimates that journeys between London and Glasgow/Edinburgh will take three hours and 40 minutes.

Jim Steer, author of High Speed Rail Group’s report, said it is “essential” that the UK focuses on a “green recovery” from the coronavirus pandemic.

He went on: “As transport is now the largest contributor to the UK’s emissions, the sector has a duty to act quickly... to reduce them.”

A dream come true: Teenager who wrote poem to bring a smile to care home residents has her work published

By Deborah Anderson

BECOMING a published poet at the age of 16 is no mean achievement and, for Siobhan McCallion, it is a dream come true.

The fifth-year pupil at St Margaret Mary’s Secondary in Glasgow was moved to write a poem for people living in her local care home during the coronavirus outbreak.

When she got in touch with our poetry editor, Lesley Duncan, we felt this was a poem that should be shared. Growing up in Castlemilk, Siobhan lives with her grandfather, Neil, and sister, Sarah, 14.

She was inspired to start writing poetry after her grandmother, Patricia, died.

The piece was written at the start of lockdown when care homes across the country were first hit



Siobhan McCallion was inspired to write a poem for care home residents after her grandmother died

by the pandemic. Siobhan wanted to do something that would make the residents of Ardenraig Care Home in Castlemilk know that people were thinking of them.

She said: “Writing poetry is a way for me to express my thoughts and feelings and I decided to write something about people living in my local care home.

“I thought how would I feel about the situation we are in. “I thought you would want to know people out there are thinking of you and I wanted to make them smile.”

Ms Duncan said: “This message from a 14-year-old girl to the residents at her local care home is impressive in its maturity and kindness.”

Siobhan’s poem

2020 was supposed to be one of the greats
One where people start a new
but all they do is break
A pandemic on our hands
risking the lives of many
I’m so sorry for everyone we’ve
lost already

There are no more people on the
street and there’s no more
interaction
Having to stay inside and to gain
family and peers reactions
To be closer to ones here today
Because sometimes you just
need a hug and someone to tell
you “it’s ok”

We wish things could be
different but for now we are
certain
To take care of our elders and to
head in the right direction
To care for your health and for
ones who can’t take care of
themselves

We are all good people, when
there is food on the shelves
I am devastated by what has
happened to our year
With many in panic and
constant fear
But to respect ones who are older
Those who can’t make it to their
family’s shoulders
I want you to know I think of you
all in such drastic times

Remember to be happy and
enjoy my rhymes
You are all loved and cared for in
a wider but now indoor
community
I want to say we are all here for
you in unity

We may not be near and further
than two metres away
But I hope you have had an
awesome day
Interact with your fellows you’re
with now and stay safe
And I want to see a constant
smile upon your face
We all look to our past
generations for guidance and
help
But now we get to return the
favour

With food that has great flavour
I don’t want anyone to be
forgotten especially not you
Please stay healthy and we will
all help you through
Right now, till the end of
whenever

I’m just letting you know you’ll
have our respect, help and grace
forever
Enjoy the peace indoors while it
lasts
Because when this is all over, we
can put it in the past
With many hopefully brighter
years again
Keep being you
And we will do the rest

Former MP in court on child sex charge

A FORMER MP has appeared in court charged with a child sex offence.

Eric Joyce, 59, who was Labour MP for Falkirk between 2000 and 2012, is accused of making an indecent photograph of a child.

The BBC has reported that he was given unconditional bail and will next appear at Ipswich Crown Court for a pre-trial hearing on July 7.

The former shadow minister, of Worlingworth, Suffolk, was arrested in November 2018, police officers said. The charge alleges that,

between 7 August 2013 and 6 November 2018, he made an indecent photograph of a child.

Prosecutors said the file, found on a device, was classed as a Category A image.

As a Labour MP, Mr Joyce also held the post of shadow Northern Ireland minister in 2010.

He left the party to serve as an independent MP for Falkirk in 2012 but stepped down before the 2015 general election.

Mr Joyce joined the army in 1977.

He served for 21 years and rose to become a major.

Ant and Dec ‘sorry’ over TV sketch in blackface broadcast in 2003

ANT and Dec have apologised for a segment of Saturday Night Takeaway in which they impersonated people of colour using blackface.

The pair darkened their skin and wore prosthetics for the undercover sketch, in which they pranked famous faces while in disguise.

The presenting pair said they would not make those sketches today and had requested ITV, which broadcasts the show, remove them from their streaming catch-up service.

A statement on their Instagram and Twitter

accounts said: “During past episodes of Saturday Night Takeaway we impersonated people of colour in the Undercover segment of the show.

“We realise that this was wrong and want to say that we are sincerely sorry to everyone that we offended.

“We purposely stopped doing this several years ago and certainly would not make these sketches today.

“We had already taken steps to ensure footage was taken down and have again recently confirmed with ITV that these segments, and any other

historical content that could cause offence, does not appear on either the ITV Hub or the Saturday Night Takeaway YouTube Channel.”

The pair wore blackface in 2003 as they dressed up as two fictional Jamaican women, Patty and Bernice, to prank Emmerdale cast members. And in 2004 they dressed up as two Japanese girls, Suki and Keiko, using make-up and exaggerated accents.

It comes after Little Britain was removed from BBC iPlayer after coming under fire because of the use of blackface.

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The Herald

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