

Right To The Street Podcast:

Series 3 Episode 5 - Culture & the night time economy

Introduction

Eve: Welcome to the Right to the Streets edition of the GM Moving Podcast. Join the conversation about what makes our streets, parks, and public spaces joyful, welcoming places for people to be and to be active. Join me, Eve Holt, Strategic Leader at GreaterSport on the journey around the streets. As we explore people's freedom to move about without fear, in each episode we hear about the roles we can all play to make where we live, work, and play places where all women and girls feel they belong and are invited to be active.

We gather stories, experiences, and ideas as we speak to strategic leaders, decision makers, and lots of local people who are creating the conditions in place for everyday moving and active lives for all.

In this episode, you'll hear from leaders and locals as we explore women and girls experiences of accessing and enjoying the city's nighttime economy and cultural offer, and what can be done to make it a better, safer, and more joyful experience. When we talk about culture and the nighttime economy, it's often the things that we do after hours, including the theatre, cinema, gig going, or nipping down the pub, having a cocktail in a bar, or hitting a nightclub.

When we talk about these venues and the streets around them, it's important to consider both the customers and the people who work there. Manchester is known around the world for its sports culture and music venues. Trafford is home to some of the biggest concert venues, including Lancashire Cricket Ground, Victoria Warehouse, and Old Trafford Football Ground, all of which are popular venues for international artists and gig goers.

The regular influx of visitors brings a big boost to local economy, but sometimes comes at a cost for local people and place. In this episode, we'll explore some of the challenges in the sector and the things that can be

done to make venues and the streets around them safer and more joyful places for everyone to live, work, and play.

So coming up in this episode, we go out and speak to a bunch of gig goers in Old Trafford about their experiences of feeling safe on a night out, and the precautions they take to feel safer.

Gig Goer: Factoring in, are you close to somewhere that's open like a garage close enough to the venue? If one of us loses our phone or whatever, we've got like a meeting point.

Interview 1

Eve: But first, let's speak to two Greater Manchester leaders who are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that your night out or the place you work after hours is safe. Joining me in Emmeline Pankhurst Room in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Offices is one of the region's most well-known faces and voices when it comes to talking about the nighttime economy.

Sacha Lord: My name is Sacha Lord. I'm the co-founder of both Park Life Festival, the Warehouse Project, and I'm also the Nighttime Economy Advisor for Greater Manchester.

Eve: Sacha grew up in Altrincham, in Trafford, and this year marks his 30th year of promoting events in Manchester. In 2018, Sacha was invited by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, to become the region's first ever nighttime economy advisor.

Joining Sacha and myself is a formidable force for good when it comes to advocating for the safety of women and girls in Trafford.

Jo Harding: I'm Councillor, Jo Harding, and I represent the Ward of Urmston in Trafford, and I'm the executive member for Culture, Leisure, and Strategic Partnerships in Trafford.

Eve: Jo's been a Councillor since 2011 and has worked in the health and social care sector for over 25 years.

Sacha Lord: I think on a night out, safety has to be number one. And I'll be completely honest, look, there are very few positives that came out of the Covid period, but what it did do is it gave the industry a moment to sit back and actually look at what we were doing right and what we were doing wrong. Were we treating the customers and the staff as well as best we could in terms of safety.

I think the answer is probably no. We could do a lot more, and I think coming out of that, that's one of the things that we're not just talking about here in Greater Manchester, but we're actually putting into effect as well. Deeds not

Eve: Deeds not words.

Sacha Lord: Exactly.

Eve: So can you tell us some of the things that you've been involved in, in doing in Greater Manchester?

Sacha Lord: When you think about safety, most people think about customers on, on a night out. We've got to think about the staff as well. So many times we're hearing stories about staff walking home after work and, let's be honest, let's not sugarcoat it. We know my industry isn't greatly paid when you are working behind a bar or when you're serving in a restaurant.

So it's not viable to get taxis home. And, and at the moment, and I say at the moment, cause I think things might change transport in the early hours of the morning isn't fantastic in Greater Manchester at the moment. So we have to create these safe spaces. And one of the things we launched a couple of weeks ago when Unite came up to Greater Manchester's, we stood shoulder to shoulder with Liverpool City region as well, and we launched Get Me Home Safely.

And that is putting more of the onus onto the operator to say, look, at the end of the night, don't just shut the doors at the nightclub, kick all your staff out. You are responsible for those staff to make sure they get home

safely. That's the correct thing to do. We know we do this at Park Life. Put double decker buses on.

That's one of the things we're doing. But on a safe night house as well with the customers, we did launch pre Covid and the slow going on as well. Safety havens and what that is, if somebody has had a few drinks on a night out, these places, you can actually sit with St. John's Ambulance, people who are qualified.

You can talk to them, sober up, but it might be a case where you just feel a bit anxious or you just want to recharge your phone because you've lost your friends on a night out and get in touch with them, or you just want a cup of tea or something.

Eve: So how do people find out where a safe haven is? How would they know that there is one that they can access?

Sacha Lord: We've purposely put them in busy areas. So if you're on a night out in Wigan, the streets will go to is King Street, that's where all the bars and clubs are, and it's slap bang in the centre. And what's really good actually at beginning of the night is whoever's working it from St. John's will go to the security on the front doors or the managements and say, look, we're here again. Any issue, just bring them over to us.

Eve: Great, thank you. So Joanne, both in your Councillor role as Ward Councillor in your exec role, why does this issue matter to you? Well,

Jo Harding: Well, for me Eve, as well as being a Councillor, I'm also a citizen in Trafford. I'm a woman who lives in Trafford and I'm the mum of an eighteen year old girl.

So it matters hugely to me because I want my life and environment to be safe. I want my daughter and her friends and her life to be vibrant and safe and that she can feel she can go about her life and enjoy all of the great experiences that Greater Manchester has to offer. But as a Councillor, I regularly hear from women in Trafford who tell me some of the terrible experiences that they have had on nights out or when they've been

exercising or in the park, or just some of those encounters that they have in everyday life.

So I hear the stories and it matters to me that we work to find solutions. the other thing to say for me is that this isn't about demonising boys and men either. It's important we recognise we have an issue. This was really brought to life to me by some really brave students at one of the schools in Trafford who told me when they were doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award and they were walking through Trafford and a group of guys on a construction site spoke to them in a really misogynistic and sexually harassing them, and these girls are fifteen. They were terrified, so they opened up to me. Then as a result of that came other stories about body shaming in school and just in everyday life, what it's like to be a young woman. So looking to find solutions men involving boys and men.

One of the things I'm looking to develop is an education charter in Trafford. So we have boys who feel confident to intervene or say this is not okay. That will also feed into the Greater Manchester gender-based violence work. So it matters hugely, but it matters that we find solutions too.

Eve: And we're gonna be talking with some of the girls as well, so pleased that they came forward and they approached you, didn't they?

Cause they'd, I think, seen you as someone that cared about this issue. And we're gonna have those on a future podcast, which is great. But again, we know that often it isn't reported that people don't think they're gonna be taken seriously. They don't think their experiences are gonna be validated.

So in your experience, Sacha across all those cultural venues and in your experience of managing Park Life is there anything you've seen that helps encourage them young women to report incidents? And what can we do so that they do know they're gonna be heard. They're gonna be listened, and they're gonna be believed?

Sacha Lord: As people that kids look up to it's our responsibility to make them understand they are going to be heard. There's an attitude change now, and I think boys and men are understanding what was wrong a a few

years ago. And I do think attitude is definitely changing. And I think one thing we have said in Greater Manchester, which is absolutely right, is call it out. If something's not right, if you are a boy, a man, you see something's wrong, call it out.

Eve: I'm intrigued. So when you think there's a change, what have you seen and heard that's giving you some hope that there's this bit of a cultural change coming or happening?

Sacha Lord: On a ground level. So I've seen it at Warehouse Project.

I'm not going to sit here and lie and say everything at Warehouse Project is absolutely perfect. It's really not. So we have volunteers who are trained. We call them the Angels, and they walk around the venue the whole time looking for girls and women who are vulnerable. And the change that we've noticed in the last couple of years is actually not just their friends, but boys and men are actually bringing them forward now and saying, look, we've just seen this here. This happened. That's not right. And they actually help the volunteers to go to security and point out where the issues happened. And we haven't really seen that apart from the last couple of years. That was not happening, certainly pre Covid. So that's why I think attitudes are changing slightly.

Eve: Great. That's good to hear. And one of the elements of the project has been bystander training. So how do we encourage people to know how they can take action. They can call it out and be good allies and good bystanders, whether again, that's in the workplace, in schools, in college, on the street, in our communities.

So it sounds like probably the training for the Angels, I imagine it has lots of similarities. Is that something that you see in here as a norm across other festivals or events across nighttime operators, is that something that people expect to have in place?

Sacha Lord: The responsible ones, yes. If you're a licensee, there are five objectives that you have to tick the box for.

One of the main ones is actually looking after everybody in that venue. It's their responsibility then to pass that message on to whether it's security, whether it's the bar staff. I think what I'd say to anybody listening to this who goes on a night out, is don't automatically assume as most people do.

If you run into a problem, you've got to contact a member security. Those bar staff or the staff that's there, whether they're cleaning the floor, whatever, they are the front line. Really go to the nearest member staff and say there's a problem. There is a good chance that they will know exactly how to deal with that.

Eve: And is there anything more we can do that, standardises that so makes that the norm that all operators know that all staff is gonna have a basic level of training to be a good bystander, a good ally.

Sacha Lord: Definitely. And this is something we're doing right in Greater Manchester. you've heard of the good employment charter that's been introduced and take up was not fantastic within hospitality.

We know the reasons why it was shut, but we are open, Greater Manchester is bouncing back quicker than many other city regions.

Jo Harding: For me, great. That we're having this conversation, but things aren't changing quickly enough in that look at the example I just gave you about those construction site workers. I will guarantee they will have a partner, a sister, maybe a daughter, their Mum, they wouldn't speak to their Mum, daughter, partner the way they spoke to those kids.

They simply wouldn't. But there's something innate that they thought that that was okay. So that has to be called out. It's that casual, everyday sexism and misogyny. And there's some brilliant examples on the, Is This Okay video.

Is this Okay video speakers: Hey, beautiful. Give us a smile. I bet you are almost pretty when you smile.

Oi don't ignore me.

Come on love. Think you are better than me, yeah, you're not even that fit.

What? You're not gonna invite me no?

You're asking for it dressed like that. Where you off tonight? She definitely wants it.

Oi sexy.

Do you think this is okay?

Jo Harding: Social media plays a huge part in what young boys and men have access to.

So they have access to porn from a very early age, which gives a very false sense of what relationships are like with women and girls. So I think that has to be challenged and worked upon for sure.

Eve: So what are some of the things that you would like to see operationalised across our cultural venues, our nighttime economy in Trafford?

Jo Harding: So in Trafford, there's the Right to the Streets work we are doing, which I think is really exciting. Women are coming to us and saying, we do want to exercise more, but if the street lighting's too dark or if there are too many trees, and it's really dark, I run to the gym. I don't want to run to the gym if it's dark and wet and cold, because I do feel more anxious about that, and it's about all ages.

If we want women to be physically active and well, we've got to consider how all ages feel and Right to the Streets is the right thing really. We all have a right to the streets, so. There's the Right to the Streets. There's licensing, responsible licensing laws, working with our taxi drivers and nighttime economy, but for me it starts early doors.

So that prevention work, having those conversations with young boys and men, but keeping boys and men safe is vital in our fight to get this right.

Interview 2

Eve: So on that rallying call to action, let's leave Jo and Sacha for a few minutes. Come with me to speak to a bunch of excitable Gig Goers who are experiencing the nighttime economy in Trafford, firsthand.

So we are just on the road right outside Victoria Warehouse. There's lots of taxis with lots of partygoers who will go into see Fatboy Slim. I'm very jealous. So is Danielle. Guttled. And you can hear a few ticket touts in the background, buying and selling the last few tickets and it's just been great.

It's great to talk to people as they arrive about their experiences on our streets. What makes them feel safe, what doesn't and what are the things we can improve.

Gig Goer: I always think about how to be safe. It's always something that I think about even I live in a really nice village. I'm gonna go back there tonight and then I will still think, how am I getting home? Am I gonna be okay and which way am I walking? Is it lit? And that's ridiculous. Cause it's a really safe village, isn't it?

Gig Goer: Yeah, it is.

Gig Goer: And if I'm in the city centre then I would always be like quite conscious of that. I dunno. I suppose it's more well lit. There's more CCTV.

Gig Goer: It is safety numbers as well.

Gig Goer: Yeah.

Gig Goer: I think if you're on your own, isolation I think is a big thing. So walking around on your own, instantly feel fearful. I think if you've got people with you around you. That's what's important and I think that's where for me that's definitely something I would look for. Am I on my own? Have I got people near me?

Gig Goer: I think the lighting's a big thing.

Gig Goer: I always take roads that've got lighting. I like plan my route by lighting. So, I'll always go, right. Okay. That's the better lit route. So I'll walk that way instead because I just think it, it feels safer that way.

Eve: So you do a lot of planning? Sounds like I think about it a lot.

Gig Goer: I'm a planner.

Eve: And do you all feel like consciously or subconsciously you are thinking about what you're doing?

Gig Goer: Yeah, I do. I do, but I carry my keys in my hand just in case. I always put my key through my fingers. So that just in case.

Gig Goer: But I think you, you're absolutely right. What's sad is that this is all a conversation. Like we have to think about it. It has to be a thought. You cannot just come out on a night like tonight and just go, I'll be okay. Have that confidence. It never happens. You always think about how am I getting home? Who knows where I am? Who am I with? Do they know what to do if I'm missing? These are all conversations that you have internally.

Gig Goer: And it would be a wonderful place if that wasn't the case.

Gig Goer: Yeah. Just imagine. But men don't have those conversations or those thoughts.

Gig Goer: No, not all enough. My husband literally walks the total opposite way home to I will and I had that conversation with him and I was like, he the dark. Oh, straight up the dark path. And I'm like, what are you doing. That's dangerous. And he said, 'oh no, it's not.' Because it's not. It's not.

Eve: What you think has made that difference? Why does he feel safe doing that and do other men and why don't you?

Gig Goer: Physical strength, but that's sad. It's sad that it comes to that, but I think that's what it is.

It's physical strength to be able to stop someone doing something. And also, just the fact that...

Gig Goer: It's written in history as well. That's how it feels. That's the stuff women have to deal with. That's the narrative that women have and it's not the narrative men have and I look forward to the day when I have my daughters not have that narrative.

But I don't know how we make that happen. I don't have the answer.

Eve: What do you think?

Gig Goer: I think some of it's education for men as well.

Gig Goer: I'm a secondary school teacher and we're doing an awful lot in school about this thing. So I teach in a secondary school and it's a big priority for us. It's a massive priority. Gender equality in both senses. It really affects women, but gender equality also really affects men. And we just basically always working on instilling that in our men that they have to look after a night out.

Gig Goer: But I don't think it's just that, I don't think it's just looking after people. But I think it's educating men how women feel if you are following somebody late at night with not necessarily malicious intent, but that might make a woman feel uncomfortable. So I've read things about guys who will now cross the road or things like that, which I think is, it's an education for men as well to understand why women feel vulnerable.

Gig Goer: However, I will just say, I think in all seriousness, The teenagers in our village do that really well. I actually think teenagers are getting it. If there's a young man and he's maybe sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, he will always cross the road. And I think that message is getting across to the younger people.

I think the future is bright. I do think they are getting it slowly but surely in secondary school. I do think, obviously there'll always be in society, those that are deviant, that want to make people feel uncomfortable. We're never

gonna get rid of that. But I do think as a whole, the youth of today are getting it.

Eve: Do you hear things, like the young men in your secondary school. So do they say things differently? So what things make you have that hope?

Gig Goer: I do. I think people pull up sexist comments a lot more. I think that's not acceptable anymore. Obviously you're still gonna get pupils that do it, but I do think there is definitely a change where other people will call out those conversations and say, that's not okay. There has been a massive shift on that from when I was at school and people were pinging your bar straps. It's changed. That doesn't happen. That doesn't happen anymore. It's not okay.

Eve: Good sense of hope. Go on, I'm gonna ask you one quick question.

Gig Goer: He has three daughters. He's good.

Eve: Yes. You've got three daughters. So for you, in terms of them feeling safe on our streets and stuff, are you concerned?

Gig Goer: Yeah, of course I am. I'd like them to live up in a generation that doesn't fear it, to be honest, and doesn't have the same fears that our generation had. And I think as the generations go on, they've got better to better, but, there's a lot of room for improvement.

Eve: And do you see or hear other men if you are out and about? Sometimes it's low level stuff, isn't it? It's cat calling or it's the language that's used and that behaviour, that level of misogyny really. That sometimes just builds up and creates a culture that makes us all feel unsafe. Do you see or hear stuff and do you ever feel able to call stuff out?

Gig Goer: I mean, I'm in my forties now, so when I was younger, maybe a lot more. I think it's less and less the generations get more, more wise, more educated. So I think they're getting better and better and, we've got a lot of hope for the future, but there's still room for improvement.

Eve: We move on and spot a group of mainly girls heading into the venue. I ask them if they feel safe when they go out at night.

Gig Goer: I feel safe when we are all together, but not on my own. No.

No. Not on my own. Not at all. No.

Eve: So what sort of things do you do? So you come out as a group?

Gig Goer: Yeah. Or if I'm on my own, I'll probably ring someone. That's probably the safest thing to do.

We've got each other on location, so we always know where each other is.

Yeah. If I'm going somewhere, I'll text saying can you just track me.

Eve: The only lad in the group has an interesting take on the safety of women and girls here in the UK and thinks it's a societal issue.

Gig Goer: Society in the UK is a bit broken. You go anywhere else in Europe or into the more conservative areas. Women aren't treated as poorly as they are over here. But because of the poor social structure and poor education over here women obviously do feel a bit more threatened as they do. So I'm saying there seems a bit more reform in that sense.

Eve: Great. Thank you. So you talked there about education. So is that's one of the things that you think would make a difference?

Gig Goer: It's not just education, it's just family values as well, family structure. Where I'm from, it's a bit more stronger than it is in the UK. So women don't feel a sense of so much danger as they do over here.

Eve: And where are you from?

Gig Goer: Slovakia

Eve: So is there anything that either you've learned or that you've learned that does make a difference? So what sort of things that you don't have to

do that other people can do that would make you feel safer? Whether that's men or whether it's the design of venues.

Gig Goer: I don't really know, to be honest.

No. Don't think there is anything at the minute that does make me feel any safer other than having each other.

Yeah. I feel like you just need someone there with you. I don't feel safe on my own. Sometimes, I used to go to a gym in a town centre and I wouldn't feel safe walking to my car just because it was dark and there's bars about, and I'd be on my own.

I'd move gyms completely in the wintertime just because my preferred gym was such a long walk in the dark. So I had to walk to a poorer gym like in the centre just so I would feel safe getting on the bus home, it's ridiculous.

We're staying in a hotel tonight and I texted Lauren and I was saying, we can't walk home here. We need to get a taxi. It's just safer, but it's just life, isn't it?

Eve: It shouldn't be though, should it? Like do you male friends have that experience?

Gig Goer: No. Not that I know of.

Yeah, no. If I'm walking down the street on my own and there's a bunch of dudes walking towards me. Yeah. There might be a bit of a threat. You don't know what they're doing. You don't know if they're taking anything, you don't know if they're drunk, if they're high on anything else. Especially in England where the knife crime is absolutely ridiculous. It's dangerous for everyone. Obviously women feel a lot more in danger. But guys are in the same sense. It's just like we don't speak quite as much.

If it was a group of girls coming towards me or even a single girl, I wouldn't feel the same as if it was a group of men or a single man. So I'd say in some ways it is the fear of what could happen with a man rather than a woman. Cause a woman is as likely to rob me as a man realistically.

But nine times out of ten, you're absolutely fine, aren't you.

Oh yeah.

You just can't take the risk. You just get a bit worried.

The only time I've ever been jumped actually was by a girl!

So it is what it is.

Eve: There's a bit of a gap between actually not feeling safe, but have you experienced anything that's made you unsafe? And that might be some like low level harassment and stuff do you get on the streets? Do you have people saying stuff?

Gig Goer: Not so much now, but I think it's almost ingrained in my brain now that there is a danger and then you see about everything on the news and you're like, oh God, what's gonna happen next?

Yeah. I don't think mine's mainly on the streets. It's in clubs, like boys like to get handsy. Like there's a club like where I'm from in Chorley, and there's guys that just come up to you and, they'll fondle your breasts or your bum or something like that. And just without any permission. And they'll just go up and do that and they think it's okay.

Eve: So are there clubs and venues that take actions that help prevent that or make you feel safe or make you felt you could report it?

Gig Goer: Yeah, there's the Ask Angela thing now, isn't there. If you're on a really bad date, you can go and say Ask Angela and they'll tell you how to get home. But a lot of the time it's just so happened so quickly.

There was one in Leeds where I'm from, a Prysm in Leeds and someone grabbed my breast and I told a member of security because I was on a work night out and it happened in front of all my colleagues and they went, well, if you really want us to, we can kick them out, but we'll have to speak to the manager. And then it just felt like, well, am I making a big deal of it. So it didn't happen.

Eve: Just behind us. A car door slams and a few women climb out of a taxi. We approach them for a natter.

Gig Goer: I'm not really sure to be honest with you about the area. I mean, we've been around here at night, I guess anywhere cause it is quite out of the way. You probably wouldn't feel fully safe.

Eve: And you've obviously all arrived tonight in a taxi as a big group as well, and right by the entrance. So do you do that consciously by thinking about safety or is that just laziness?

Gig Goer: Laziness.

Eve: And do you go out for lots of gigs and go out regularly?

Gig Goer: Yeah, we do, don't we?

Eve: And generally, do you feel safe then going out at night and going out?

Gig Goer: Depends what areas.

Eve: Okay.

Gig Goer: Factoring in, are you close to somewhere that's open? Whether that's like literally a service, like a garage or a corner shop, or close enough to the venue is there the public transport that's nearby, we've obviously got an Uber.

Eve: Yeah, yeah. So you plan those things.

Gig Goer: Yeah, absolutely.

Eve: And getting away at the end of the night have you've got a taxi sorted or how are you gonna get home?

Gig Goer: Not yet, but for example, if one of us loses our phone or whatever, we've got like a meeting point and you make sure that you have a safe, secure place.

Eve: I want to be your friend. How do I do that? You think wisely.

We have a few minutes to go before FatBoy Slim takes the stage, we grab our last Gig Goers is who put a lovely positive spin on the conversation of safety here in Greater Manchester.

Gig Goer: When I come to Manchester, I genuinely do feel safe. Yeah.

Eve: Amazing.

Gig Goer: Manchester is is my home. It is the New York City of England.

It is. I can go out my friends...

and be who you want...

No, but also if my friends want to go, I welcome that. Go home. That's fine.

If you were on your own in Manchester, you walk into any bar. You can always talk to a group people and they're so welcoming. You could walk round in Manchester wearing a bin bag and not one person would question you.

They'd be like, oh my God, that's such a good outfit.

Eve: Have a good night.

Gig Goer: Oh, thank you.

Eve: Thank you very much. Take care. Cheers.

I dunno about you, but I think that last young woman. Would make a fantastic addition to Marketing Manchester.

Interview 1 continued...

So we've heard firsthand some of the experiences, safety precautions, and ideas from those who experience culture and the nighttime economy. Let's rejoin Jo and Sacha to talk about what they would like to see happen to create a nighttime economy that's safe for all. I picked back up by asking Sacha to explain more about the recent anti spiking movement that he's been involved with.

Sacha Lord: Look, spiking is not new. Sadly, it's been around for many, many years. What was brilliant is the girls and women about two years ago, across the whole of the UK said, do you know what, enough is enough. We're not gonna just accept this anymore. We can't turn a blind eye to it. And I don't know if you remember, there was a boycott, they boycotted nightclubs across the whole of the UK and actually it was a Wednesday night that it happened in Manchester.

And I remember it really well cause I was in. London during the daytime and it was Andy Burnham phone me up that said, have you heard about this demonstration that's taking place tonight and I had. And he said, I think we should go along and have a listen to what they say. And we were both shocked how many people attended it.

There must have been seven, eight hundred people there. We listened to some of the stories and it didn't feel right that we said anything. It was their platform. It was for them to say it. But we engaged and three or four days later, With Greater Manchester Police. We both walked down to the University and we met and we heard some of those stories and I knew it went on. But I was shocked actually at what they were telling us. Completely unacceptable. So we started some work in Greater Manchester, rolling out onsite spiking kits, because half the problem is once you've slept it off, there's a good chance that it's actually out of your system, so you need to get it there and then onsite.

So we're rolling that out and it felt positive and we're hearing the right noise from the government to say we're going to make this a specific criminal offense. And actually, Priti Patel came out and said that she'd make it specific criminal offense, but then remarkably a none of us could understand why it was a complete curve ball.

The current home secretary came out in beginning of January and said, well, actually, She's quite fine with a law that was made in 1861. Now you don't have to go out and socialise to understand that socialising in 1861 is completely different to socialising in 2023. And I was away at the time. So I said to my wife, I can't understand what the thought process is behind this? So I mentioned something on Twitter. I opened up my private messages and said, get in touch. Let's have a conversation when I get back, expecting twenty, twenty five people maybe to come forward. There were hundreds and hundreds there were that many people that came forward I feel guilty cause I couldn't personally respond. There were too many for me to respond to. But the story that happened time and time and time again, that's what I was told was. Well, it did happen, but actually we never reported it because we didn't think it would be taken seriously. Or luckily when my friends were there, they looked after me, they got me in a cab, they took me home, I slept it off.

And I didn't want to waste anyone's time. That is not right. And I think firstly, by making it not a specific criminal offense, what message did that send out to the criminals. Because that is what they are. They're criminals that are doing this. I think if you're one of these criminals, you need to know that you're facing a custodial sentence and, you need to give the ammunition to the police as well to be able to deal with this because, I'm speaking to police and they are slightly confused about what they would do with it. So we are in the process of trying to get that a specific criminal offence and I've been down to Parliament a couple of times now and we're getting cross-party support on it, which is good.

I think it's the right thing to do, and, if we can achieve that in Greater Manchester, hopefully it'll have an effect for the rest of the UK.

Eve: And obviously that was one of the key levers we've got, haven't we, is policing and recognising that when things are crimes, so making spiking in particular a criminal offence.

We also know that lots of the day stay harassment, everyday sexism. That happens on our streets also isn't a policing matter. Doesn't seem to be a policing matter because it's not a criminal offence. And misogyny itself still isn't a hate crime. Anything that you would to add Jo in terms of your

experience about what more would we like to see happen that would ensure that it is taken seriously. It is a policing matter and then that the resources are there to act?

Jo Harding: Well, we've only got to look at some of the institutional misogyny that is in some of our services. We've seen reports from policing and the fire service report that's come out over the last couple of days hasn't made pleasant reading.

So I think we have a job of work to do in some of our services, which are meant to be trusted institutions. So, to Sacha's point, when he said, then some victims of spiking will go and sleep it off, and then they'll think, I'm not going to bother reporting it because there's some of that victim shaming.

Or they'll be thinking, oh, nobody's going to listen to me. Nobody's going to believe me. And that does happen with women and girls. Something can happen. It's not their fault. It's not about what they're wearing. It's not about how much they've had to drink. It's not about whether they're walking somewhere that isn't well lit.

It's not on them, but they will invariably think. Nobody's going to take me seriously. Nobody's going to listen to me. Because you look at some of the mainstream press about some of these trusted institutions, and it's quite terrifying. So they won't report. So there's work we have to do as a system at a local, regional, and a national level to really have those honest conversations about how we change culture.

And that has to be some of those smaller steps, some of those conversations. Starting in Schools and it takes men to be honest with themselves and to put the mirror up and say, am I guilty of that sometimes? Do I behave like that sometimes? It's not a great look, is it? If I'm gonna advocate for change, I need to be somebody who leads that change. So we need some of those ambassadors that are honest about some of the things they do sometimes and, and lead the way forward.

Sacha Lord: I didn't have access to a mobile phone when I was starting to go out at eighteen, and, everybody's got them now. Everyone's on TikTok,

everyone's on Instagram. Not so much Twitter for the young kids, but some of the things that's available on there.

And then some of the disgusting people on there that have platforms is quite shocking actually. And there was one recently, who fortunately now is in prisons at the moment. But some things he was saying and doing, I don't understand how he's allowed a platform to do that.

Jo Harding: But also mobile phones are used very much as a weapon.

Upskirting taking photographs of women and girls that are potentially in quite vulnerable situations if they have had a drink or if they are vulnerable. And next thing, there's revenge porn. There are images all across social media that then you can't take down. They are out there.

They are then an absolute blight on a young woman's life. There was the case in Ireland of a young woman with revenge porn. It was horrific to read, and you just think whilst phones are great and they keep us connected, you look at this world of social media, twenty four hour connectivity and images that circulated around the world. It is utterly terrifying.

Eve: So there's this mainstreaming isn't there then sexualisation, objectification of women that we're talking about here, which is a real cultural issue and we are bombarded every day from all direction still with this narrative. That means that you often feel that it is your fault.

And that's, that's where your place in society. So what's the ask of people listening. Because what we don't want is stay static and people become overwhelmed and go that it's too hard to make a difference. What can I do? What can little old me do to make a difference?

Jo Harding: Well, I am always going to say deeds, not words, aren't I?

I'm always going to say that because we can put as many strategies with glossy pictures as we want out there. We can do all of that. Doesn't make an ounce of difference unless you're going to commit to taking some actions. So I think that's the first thing. Really, it has to be deeds not

words. It has to be stepping up when it's the right thing to do, call it out, challenge it. And I think we all have to own it together, recognise there's an issue, and be committed to change and keep the faith. Cause I think we can change things. We've just gotta keep the faith.

Sacha Lord: I would say if you're a customer or if you're a member of staff, vote with your feet.

Go to those places where you do feel safe. Work in those places where you do feel safe because if you do that, And the footfall starts to shift into certain areas. You'll notice operators guilt tripped into it, and they shouldn't be guilt tripped. They should be doing it anyway. But you'll find that they need to start stepping up to the playing field that you are in.

Eve: And it's something that both of you have role modeled. So you talk about the negative side effect of social media. But both of you have used social media to signal that this is something that you say is not okay, that you will listen, that you will validate the experiences of women and girls in both the spiking example, Stretford Girls example.

Those people wouldn't have come to you if they didn't feel they'd be listened. And if you hadn't signaled out that this is something that you care about, and that's something that many of us can do, can't we. It's just signaling proactively to say, I care about this issue. I'm here. I'm gonna listen, and I'm gonna do what I can that's within my control and my influence to act and just think about how many of those people out there who probably do care about this issue, but maybe don't quite go as far enough to say that visibly and to use their power and their platform to really make a stand.

Sacha Lord: It's interesting if so, quite a lot of the people that came forward actually weren't the girls and women who'd been affected.

They're actually the Mums and Dads as well, because their kids still felt embarrassed about the whole situation, which is ridiculous when you think about it. So deeds not words. You're a hundred percent right.

Eve: And there's an education piece in that back isn't there as well in terms of that how as a woman on our streets, I still think how often I would be quick to blame myself if something happened because actually I do go running out in the dark and I want to do that.

But the fear is often, well, if something happened, people would say, well, you're stupid to be doing that. Why did you do that? Why did you walk back? Why did you go out? This shouldn't be for you. And we end up self-limiting ourselves and access to all the brilliant things that we know the city region has to offer.

Because the expectation has been really normalised that it'll be our fault. So how we, all of us as educators, and I mean all of us, not just in formal institutions, and all of his parents can help share that message that is just, as you said, it's not on you. Definitely.

Sacha Lord: Definitely. I think maybe this is subconscious change as well, because I've noticed myself, and this has probably only been the last two to three years, I go running every morning and there's a couple of, I call them gennels. Quite often or not there'll be a woman walking a dog and those gennels are quite narrow, aren't they? And I feel quite awkward and I know when she hears my feet in the background running, she'll probably get quite anxious about it. So from a distance, I always say, good morning, make a point of it to let her know that, well, I'm trying to be friendly and I'm here in the background. I think the point that you made about people crossing their own stuff, it is quite important.

Jo Harding: It is. And I mean, what you were saying, Eve, I mean, my Mum will still say to me, don't go out at night. I'm fifty six, and I'll say, Mum, I'm alright.

But I am super cautious. I am. I've got a little dog. I take him for a last walk round the block at night, about nine o'clock. And even though I feel comfortable in the area I live, I am still a little jumpy, a little twitchy when it's dark. And that's just sometimes perception when it's darker, but it is the thing about respecting that we all live in a community respecting, we want to rub along together quite nicely.

Thank you very much. And I want to look to many my community to champion my rights at the streets. I want to look to men as allies and I've got some brilliant male allies in my life and they are gonna be the champions that will get this message across too. So I think, as Eve said, really it's incumbent upon all of us to get the message without demonising boys and men, cause we all know it's not all men, but it is up to us to get that message out there.

Eve: And sometimes it's like rehumanising, isn't it. We've had lots of examples through his project of the way that when people just take the initiative to say hello. And sometimes people find that easier if they've got a dog with them or got a kid with them or something that provides that tool to just rehumanise and just remind people and, recognise that the other person may also be think fearful, maybe for another reason. And I've definitely noticed I do that more now, that if I'm out, I'm more likely to be the one that quickly says, oh hi. When I approach a big group and immediately turn around and they smile and say hello, and you've just stopped that fear.

You've broken the ice. But that can be very tricky depending on who you are on your own characteristics on whether and how much of a victim you feel like you might be in that scenario. So it's not to say that is necessarily easy or feasible for everybody, but something about how all we can all just bubble along. Get on, be human, be nice to each other. Yeah. And make the streets joyful places. So as a final word help us paint that vision of what you think Greater Manchester could look like if our streets truly felt welcoming, joyful, active places for all.

Sacha Lord: The safer it is on a night out, whether you're a customer or staff, the busier it will be. It is that simple. I know there are lots of parents out there who won't let the kids go out because they don't have the confidence it's gonna be safe. I know there are parents that won't let their kids go to Warehouse Project or Park Life. I know it. I understand it. I get it. When there's eighty thousand people and they're amongst that, can I guarantee they're one hundred percent safe?

Well, no. Of course I can't. But you do as much as you possibly can. And actually in Trafford, whilst we're talking about it Altrincham is about to

apply for purple flag, which is fantastic, and that is a really good, it's like a kite mark of a good, diverse, safe night out.

Eve: Jo?

Jo Harding: For me, it would be women telling me that they've had a brilliant night out, not only in Trafford but in Greater Manchester.

They've had a great night out, they've felt safe and they've really enjoyed themselves, and it would be boys and men saying that they are absolute active ambassadors that they call this out. It's not acceptable to behave in those ways. I want to hear more of those stories and I have said Trafford will be one of the safest boroughs for women and girls to live, and I intend to make that happen as part of the Greater Manchester work, but absolutely, it's not a utopian vision. I want all women and girls to feel safe, but ultimately we're on a journey together and we've got to keep striving to make that happen.

Eve: A big, big thanks to Sacha and Jo for taking the time out of their super busy diaries to come and talk to us.

Outro

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Right to the Streets edition of the GM Moving Podcast.

as this podcast is just the start of the conversation we'd love to hear more. Going for a night out is something that most of us really look forward to and enjoy, whether that's a cinema date, a trip to the theatre, watching your favorite band or having dinner, but what makes that night out experience feel safe for you?

What do you think could be improved? More Street Angels, taxi marshals, public transport that runs late into the night. What makes the difference? If you work in a nighttime venue or perhaps own or manage a nighttime venue, we'd also love to get your perspective. What have you seen make the difference when it comes to the safety of female staff and patrons?

Whatever it is, let us know and we'll share your thoughts in future episodes of this podcast. We've got a few ways you can get in touch. We're on social media, on LinkedIn and Twitter. Simple search, GM Moving or GreaterSport. Or you can leave as a voicemail. It's really simple and free. And you can record on your computer or phone.

You can find the link to that in this episode. Show notes and on our GM moving website. Just search, Right to the Streets podcast.

A big thanks to everyone who has contributed to this episode. We'll be releasing more episodes throughout the next few months, so keep an eye on our social media pages for when the next one will be released, or simply hit follow or subscribe on whatever podcast player you're listening to right now.

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