

IN THE CROWN COURT AT NOTTINGHAM

FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2022

R

-v-

ALEX BELFIELD

**SENTENCING REMARKS AND JUDGMENT ON THE CROWN'S
APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 5A OF THE PROTECTION
FROM HARASSMENT ACT 1997**

The Honourable Mr Justice Saini:

1. Mr Belfield, on 5 August 2022, following a 5 week trial here at Nottingham Crown Court the jury convicted you on 4 counts. On Count 5 you were convicted of stalking Mr Bernard Spedding - known professionally as Bernie Keith. I will refer to him by that name. The stalking of Mr Keith caused him serious alarm or distress. On Count 5, you were convicted of stalking Ben Hewis, also causing him serious alarm or distress. On Count 7 you were convicted of stalking Philip Dehaney. On Count 8, you were convicted of stalking Jeremy Vine.
2. Counts 5 and 6 are the more serious form of aggravated stalking because they caused your victims serious alarm or distress. Counts 7 and 8 reflect the less serious form of stalking under the law.
3. It now falls to me to sentence you for these offences and to deal with the Crown's related application for restraining orders against you in relation to Mr Keith, Mr Hewis, Mr Dehaney and Mr Vine. Those orders seek to prevent further harassment of these people. I will refer to these individuals collectively in my remarks as "the complainants".
4. At the end of my sentencing, I will also need to deal with a separate matter which is the Crown's application for restraining orders against you in relation to the 4 complainants where the jury acquitted you. Those were counts 1-4 concerning Rozina Breen, Helen

Thomas, Liz Green and Stephanie Hirst. I will deliver a judgment on that application when I conclude my sentencing and it will be available as an addendum to the sentencing remarks I am now delivering.

5. The applications for restraining orders are not opposed by you but I need to give my reasons for making them.
6. My attention has been helpfully drawn by Counsel to the intimidatory offences guideline. I have also considered the general guideline on custodial sentences and the totality guideline as well as the material provisions of the Sentencing Act 2020.
7. Given that there were separate crimes against separate victims which I consider need to be each marked with distinct sentences, I propose to pass sentences which will be served consecutively. I am aware that certain of the facts overlap but consider nevertheless that this is a case for consecutive sentences given the particular forms your harassment of the different victims took.
8. Your offences are so serious that only a custodial sentence can be justified. But because I am sentencing you for more than one offence, I must ensure that, standing back, the total overall sentence reflects all your offending behaviour in a just and proportionate manner. That is the principle of totality to which I will make reference in my remarks and which you have heard Counsel discussing with me. I will apply that principle by adjusting each individual consecutive sentence.
9. I have received very helpful oral and written submissions from Mr McGuinness KC and Mr Rowcliffe for the Crown and from Mr Aubrey KC for you. Mr Aubrey KC presented your mitigation in a measured and realistic manner, recognising that the custody threshold has been crossed. I am grateful to him and to Mr McGuinness KC and Mr Rowcliffe for the substantial assistance they provided to me throughout the trial.
10. I have had regard to the moving victim personal statements which have been submitted to the court. I emphasise however that the issue of the appropriate sentences is for me and not for your victims to decide applying the relevant guidelines and the law.
11. A very helpful and detailed pre-sentence report is before me. That report shows that you have finally acknowledged the distress caused to your victims but highlights that you still appear to focus on the impact of events on you, and feel in certain respects that you have been unjustly treated.
12. I have read the several character references provided for you. I accept they speak in positive terms about you and commend your work in the community. Mr Aubrey KC has reminded me of your successful career and online following and underlined your particular style and broadcasting persona. It is also clear that you come from a close family and that you have acted with real kindness in assisting those facing substantial challenges in their lives, particularly during the Pandemic. It was also submitted that

custody would have a profound effect on you and those dependent upon you, including 9 employees.

13. Where I state findings of fact in my sentencing remarks, I am satisfied of those facts on the evidence called before the jury to a standard which makes me sure of them. A different civil standard applies when I deal with the Crown's applications for restraining orders.
14. I will begin with some of the common features of the conduct on the basis of which you were convicted by the jury, and I will then turn to the specific victims.
15. The stalking you committed was not the conventional type which is popularised in the press. You did not meet or physically approach or watch any of your victims as a traditional stalker might have done. Your methods were however just as effective as a way of intimidating your victims and were in many ways much harder to deal with. Your stalking consisted of use of repeated email communications, social media content on Twitter, and creation and publication of YouTube videos on your channel *The Voice of Reason* in which you commented in highly negative and often abusive terms about the complainants. As you described in some of your videos, your aim was to "haunt" your victims. They gave graphic evidence that they believed you would be true to your word and would never go away. It was only the imposition of bail conditions restraining your actions which have given them peace in the period to trial.
16. A number of witnesses said you had "weaponised the internet". I find that to be a wholly apt description of your conduct.
17. The emails were very widely distributed and not simply sent to the direct victims. When the victims sought to block your emails the common device you used was to use a different email address to get through to them. That tactic was used by you on many occasions. In some instances, you used the technique of identifying the personal home addresses of individuals in your communications which understandably caused them to fear for their safety. Their feelings of in effect being "followed" or "monitored" were justified.
18. The YouTube videos and Tweets reached your very substantial audience. The effect of these communications was to encourage the readers and viewers to form highly negative views of the complainants, often based on wholly false allegations by you. Those readers and viewers then joined the abuse of the complainants in a way which is sadly now a familiar feature of social media interaction.
19. Online stalkers like you have the ability to recruit an army of followers whose conduct massively expands the effect of your stalking. That is why I say your stalking is in many respects more serious than a conventional stalker.
20. I accept that in certain limited respects you were acting as a form of media commentator in stating views on matters of public interest when you made some of your

communications. However, even accepting the latitude our laws give to those exercising free speech rights, on the jury's verdicts you exceeded the generous margins. You made communications which had serious impacts on the private lives of the complainants with distressing effects on their mental and physical health.

21. I find that the motivating factor in your communications about these complainants was not the exercise of journalistic freedom to comment on matters of public interest, but personal grudges and responses to real or apparent slights. I am not imposing sentences on you because you made comments about the BBC or about matters of public interest. Your sentences reflect your repeated and personal harassment of the victims and not your views on any issue of public interest. You are entitled to hold and express views but you are not entitled to destroy the personal lives of your victims through online harassment.
22. I now turn to the specific counts. I have taken into account all of the oral and written evidence at trial but in the interests of brevity will only summarise the nature of your conduct towards each victim at a high level in order to explain my sentences and application of the guidelines.

Count 4: Bernard Spedding (Bernie Keith)

23. Turning first to Count 4 concerning Bernie Keith, he is a highly respected and established presenter of many years standing at BBC Radio Northampton. Your harassment of him took place over a substantial period of time. These were the 9 years between 2011 and 2020. It was only at the very end of this period that the harassment overlapped to some extent with that of other complainants.
24. Having once been a friend and acquaintance, your campaign of harassment against Mr Keith first took the form of many emails which sought to criticise any aspect of his shows and then moved into highly offensive material. He did his best to ignore your communications and he asked you in polite and restrained terms to stop. You did not. There were many communications and not all were produced in court. They appear to have become less frequent around 2018 but your communications escalated substantially from 1 October 2019 when you suspected that Mr Keith had communicated by email with a person he did not know- Mr Hewis - to warn him of your past behaviour, and to inform him of what he believed you had done to other BBC employees. Mr Hewis then published part of that email from Mr Keith in a Tweet. You then bombarded Mr Keith with Facebook messages, emails and made highly abusive YouTube videos about him including false allegations that he had mental health issues. Even when he instructed lawyers for you to communicate with, and they requested you not contact Mr Keith, you continued to send repeated abusive communications directly to Mr Keith. He had no escape from you. There was no purpose in communicating directly other than continuing your campaign of harassment.

25. Mr Keith gave the jury graphic and distressing evidence of how close he came to hanging himself. He was seconds away from taking his life as a result of your conduct. You made this highly successful and confident radio presenter lose all joy in life and turned him into a shell. Mr Keith also felt at serious physical risk of attack, although at no point did you commit any physical acts against him. Mr Keith gave evidence which I accept of heightened awareness of individuals, additional security measures and said he gave his fellow villagers copies of your photograph. He was terrified of you.
26. I find that Count 5 falls within Category A1 of the relevant stalking guideline. That is the most serious category. As to culpability, the history I have summarised demonstrates that your actions were conducted over a sustained period and I find were intended to maximise Mr Keith's distress. Your actions were of an extreme nature and push this matter clearly into the top of the culpability range. As to harm, as I have identified, very significant distress was caused to Mr Keith.
27. I need to identify the starting point for your sentence. Your stalking of Mr Keith as charged on the Indictment began before 3 April 2017, the date when the maximum penalty was increased from 5 years to 10 years. The guideline reflects this higher penalty. It is common ground that the maximum penalty for this Count is 5 years imprisonment.
28. If your offending had been post 3 April 2017, the starting point under the guideline for this form of stalking would have been 5 years. Both the Crown and your Counsel submitted, and I accept, that I should move down from that starting point to take into account the lower earlier statutory maximum of 5 years imprisonment. I will take a starting point of 2 years and 6 months.
29. I then need to consider aggravating and mitigating factors. There are the following two matters, which I have not already taken into account in my categorisation. They justify upward movement from the starting point. First, the fact that your postings publicly about Mr Keith resulted in followers of your social media profiles abusing him over a lengthy period. In some cases this has extended to death threats. Second, the false and scandalous accusation that Mr Keith had regularly had sex in public on gay beaches with strangers for two decades coupled with the threat to include the allegation in a story which you would sell for publication.
30. The mitigation is lack of previous convictions and previous good character. There has also been some remorse expressed, as recorded in the pre-sentence report. I make allowance for these matters and I also have regard to the principle of totality in making an adjustment to my sentence.
31. Having regard to all these matters, I impose a sentence of imprisonment of 2 years 6 months in respect of Count 5 concerning Mr Keith.

Count 6: Ben Hewis

32. As to Count 6 concerning Mr Hewis, he is a videographer who works in the theatre and wedding industry. You did not know him and have in fact never met him. His problems began when he went online in late 2019 to support those in the theatre who he believed were being unfairly attacked by you on Twitter. Your stalking of him took place between the end of 2019 and went into mid-2020, when the police became involved. Your attacks on Mr Hewis took the form of both personal emails as well as highly distressing YouTube videos. You felt that Mr Hewis had libelled you by a post on Twitter which included part of the private email Mr Keith had sent Mr Hewis on 1 October 2019. I have already referred to that email. I am sure Mr Hewis will regret for the rest of his life that he included that email in his Tweet. That is because it led you to direct a flood of abuse towards him, despite a rapid apology and retraction from him. You claimed in multiple communications to have hired and paid lawyers to sue Mr Hewis. Those statements were false. This was intimidatory behaviour towards a man who felt his family and home were at risk. I find you had no intention of taking legal action but decided to use online threats as a way to obtain details of who had supplied Mr Hewis with the information about you which he published in his tweet. Mr Hewis gave compelling evidence as to the distress he suffered and his wish to keep his pregnant wife out of the dispute.
33. The statutory maximum for this offence is 10 years. I find that this stalking was Category B1 within the guideline. As to culpability, I find your actions were intended to maximise distress to Mr Hewis and took place over a sustained period albeit a period shorter than in the case of Mr Keith. As to harm, it is clear that serious distress was caused to Mr Hewis and he has had to seek professional help as a result of your offending.
34. The Category B1 starting point is 2 years 6 months imprisonment with a range of 1-4 years.
35. As to aggravating factors justifying upward adjustment, there are 4 factors increasing seriousness, and which I have not already taken into account in my categorisation. First, you involved Mr Hewis' family by using in your videos pictures of his wife and young child. You attached an image of a foetal scan to an email and attempted to contact his wife. Secondly, you contacted Mr Hewis' clients, intending to undermine his business. Thirdly, you encouraged your followers to contact him and your posting publicly about Mr Hewis resulted in followers of your social media profiles abusing Mr Hewis. Fourthly, Google searches continue to reference articles about Mr Hewis which remain available on your websites, thereby not only perpetuating the distress but also the financial effects on Mr Hewis. These matters justify upward movement from the starting point.
36. As to downward adjustment, the mitigation is lack of previous convictions, good character and remorse in the form I have stated. These matters justify some limited downward movement and I will also need to adjust the sentence to take into account the principle of totality.

37. Having regard to all these matters, in respect of Count 5 concerning Mr Hewis, I impose a sentence of 2 years 6 months imprisonment to run consecutively to the sentence on Count 5.

Count 7: Philip Dehaney

38. As to Count 7 concerning Mr Dehaney, the jury acquitted you of the more serious form of stalking but found you guilty of the lesser alternative of the basic stalking offence. I must respect the jury's acquittal on the more serious charge and it is of relevance when I consider the levels of harm caused.

39. Like Mr Hewis, Mr Dehaney was the subject of a vicious and continued campaign of abuse principally by way of YouTube videos. He was a theatre critic and blogger who did not wish to be tagged by you into what he regarded as offensive tweets about those in the industry. He had never met you. He asked that you cease. Your online attacks and emails began in the early New Year 2020. You wrongly believed that he had repeated the contents of the Hewis tweet. You again made false representations as to intended legal action. This victim started a blog in which he provided a day to day account of your abusive conduct. That inflamed you further. When Mr Dehaney became uncontactable and refused to engage with you, you went as far as calling his mother during the lockdown at the family home. We heard a recording of that call. She is clearly a robust and impressive person. Everyone needs a mum like her. Mr Dehaney's mother repeatedly and fairly asked you again and again what had her son done that was wrong- you failed to provide any answer. The call was in my judgment part of the harassment of her son who stood by her while she took this call. It was an outrageous and cruel act to call her and to make a recording. Not only did you record the conversation, you then made false and misleading comments about what she had said about her son, seeking to demean him in a public forum. Getting his parents involved caused serious and continuing fractures in Mr Dehaney's relationship with them and in particular with his father. You also sought to humiliate Mr Dehaney about his mental health in your postings and videos. Further, you sought to in effect blackmail him by revealing details of a long spent conviction. The content of the YouTube videos you made about him at a time when he was clearly vulnerable and shielding with his parents during the first Lockdown was shocking.

40. The statutory maximum for this offence is 6 months imprisonment. I have to however consider the guideline.

41. I find that this offence falls within category A1 of the relevant stalking guideline. That is the highest category. As to culpability, your actions were planned, repetitive and intended to cause Mr Dehaney distress and included hostility based on his sexual orientation. I do not consider the fact that you are a member of the LBGTQ+ community means you cannot have acted with hostility based on Mr Dehaney's sexual orientation. As to harm, having regard to the jury's verdicts including the acquittal, I find harm and

distress including psychological harm were caused to Mr. Dehaney. Mr Dehaney has been unable to continue his blogging enterprise as a result of your actions. This was a significant change in lifestyle.

42. The category A1 starting point is 12 weeks custody with a range of a high level community order to 26 weeks custody.
43. As to aggravating factors increasing seriousness and justifying upward movement, there is one matter which I have not already taken into account. It is the fact that you posted publicly about him and that resulted in followers of your social media profiles abusing Mr Dehaney. That magnified the effect of your abuse. These matters push the offence up in the category range.
44. As to downward adjustment, the mitigation is lack of previous convictions, good character and some remorse in the form I have stated. I also have to have regard to the principle of totality and have adjusted my sentence.
45. I impose a sentence of imprisonment of 13 weeks for Count 7 to run consecutively to the sentence on Count 6.

Count 8: Jeremy Vine

46. I turn to Count 8, concerning Mr Vine who is a well-known radio and TV presenter. The jury again acquitted you of the more serious form of stalking but found you guilty of the lesser alternative of basic stalking. Until trial you had not met Mr Vine. Your actions against Mr Vine consisted of highly abusive and wholly false allegations given mass Twitter and video exposure. These were allegations to the effect that Mr Vine had somehow stolen £1000 of BBC licence payers' funds to use for what you called a "piss up" or party following the memorial service of a dear friend of Mr Vine, Mr John Myers. Mr Myers was a prominent personality in the radio industry and the BBC made a modest contribution to his memorial fund. Mr Vine did not know about this at the material time and the BBC contribution had absolutely nothing to do with him. Mr Vine did not steal anything nor did the BBC pay for the so-called "piss-up".
47. The allegations you made against Mr Vine were wholly false. You boasted online about the fact that in excess of 400,000 people had viewed your video about Mr Vine containing these false allegations. Your assertions in your videos and tweets that your allegation was supported by BBC answers to Freedom of Information Requests was also wholly false. They provided no support, as was revealed at trial. You were not a whistle-blower in any sense but developed a fixation with pursuing Mr Vine with a campaign of abuse.
48. The effect of your conduct on Mr Vine's family and daughters was significant. Although you at no stage committed any physical acts, Mr Vine considered himself and his family to be at risk from you and your followers. He had to ask his family to watch

out for you and to take care in and around their home address. You published his home address to a mass audience.

49. The statutory maximum for the offence against Mr Vine is 6 months imprisonment but I have again to return to the guideline.
50. I find that this stalking of Mr Vine falls under category A1 of the stalking guideline. The highest category. As to culpability, your false allegations were given wide publicity over two months and were intended to maximise Mr Vine's distress. As to harm, I recognise the need to give weight to the jury's verdicts including the acquittal. I find harm and distress including psychological harm was caused to Mr. Vine. He also had to make precautionary lifestyle changes for himself and his family.
51. The category A1 starting point is 12 weeks custody with a range of a high level community order to 26 weeks custody.
52. As to aggravating factors which I have not already taken into account in categorisation, there are two matters. First, you actively encouraged others to contact Mr Vine during his broadcasts to pursue the baseless allegation of theft of public money. Secondly, you also encouraged others to provide private information about Mr Vine's family and friends. Your false allegations against Mr Vine led to a torrent of abuse being suffered online by Mr Vine. That went into many thousands of abusive tweets received by him and personal threats. I consider that these aggravating matters take this offence up in the category range.
53. As to downward adjustment, the mitigation is lack of previous convictions, good character and remorse in the form I have stated. I also have to have regard to the principle of totality in adjusting the sentence.
54. For Count 8 concerning Mr Vine, I impose a sentence of 13 weeks imprisonment to run consecutively to the sentence on Count 7.

Summary of sentences

55. I will now summarise my sentences. For Count 5 concerning Mr Keith, 2 years 6 months imprisonment. For Count 6 concerning Mr Hewis, 2 years 6 months imprisonment to be served consecutively to Count 5. For Count 7 concerning Mr Dehaney, 13 weeks imprisonment to be served consecutively to Count 6. For Count 8 concerning Mr Vine, 13 weeks imprisonment to be served consecutively to Count 7.
56. This amounts to a total of 5 years and 26 weeks imprisonment. This is the shortest sentence commensurate with the seriousness of your offences and application of the principle of totality.
57. You will serve up to one half of this sentence in custody. You will serve the remainder on licence. You must keep to the terms of your licence and commit no further offence

or you will be liable to be recalled and you may then serve the rest of your sentence in custody.

58. I now turn to the issue of restraining orders in the cases where you were convicted of stalking these four complainants. You do not oppose those orders but I need to give my reasons for making them independently of your non-opposition.

Restraining Orders under section 360 of the Sentencing Act 2020

59. Based on the jury's verdicts in relation to each of these complainants and my assessment that absent a restraint you will repeat the stalking and harassment, I am satisfied that restraining orders on an indefinite basis are necessary. Your past conduct and qualified expression of remorse establish that the court's intervention is necessary to protect these complainants.
60. The terms of the draft orders before me are appropriately tailored to ensure that they only interfere with your freedom of speech rights to a limited and proportionate level.
61. I accordingly make orders in the terms of the orders before me restraining you under section 360 of the Sentencing Act 2020. As regards each of Bernard Spedding, Ben Hewis, Philip Dehaney and Jeremy Vine, you are until further order prohibited from contacting, or attempting to contact, them by any means whether direct or indirect. You must not publish through any form of publication or electronic communication, any statement or other material relating to, or purporting to relate to them. You must not monitor the use by any of them of the internet, email, or any other form of electronic communication.
62. Any breach of those orders is a serious criminal offence with substantial criminal penalties which may include imprisonment of up to 5 years. You will be given a written record of the terms of the orders. If for any reason the orders are no longer necessary and appropriate then either you or the complainants may apply to the court for them to be amended or removed. But until that time, which may never come, they will remain in force and must be complied with to the letter.

Prosecution costs

63. The costs incurred by the Crown in respect of these proceedings are £27,990 and it makes an application for such costs. I am satisfied that you should be made to pay a part of these costs pursuant to section 18(1) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. I have taken into account the point made on your behalf about the acquittals and convictions on lesser counts and the other penalties I have imposed. I consider a fair and proportionate sum is £10,000.00.
64. Based on the ownership of a house, albeit mortgaged, and the income I infer you have received from your YouTube channel, and in the absence of other counter-evidence, I

am satisfied you have the means to meet costs of £10,000.00. Indeed, it has not been submitted that you do not have the means to pay this sum.

65. The surcharge will apply.

66. Finally, I turn to my judgment on the Crown's application for restraining orders in relation to those complainants where the jury acquitted you. Again you do not oppose that application but I need to be satisfied that it is appropriate for me to make the orders and to give reasons for my decision.

Judgment on the Crown's application under section 5A of the PHA 1997

1. In relation to the complainants in respect of the counts 1-4 where Mr Belfield was acquitted, the Crown applies for restraining orders against him under section 5A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
2. These complainants were Rozina Breen, Helen Thomas, Liz Green and Stephanie Hirst. Each of these persons gave oral evidence at trial. Section 5A of the 1997 Act empowers a court to make restraining orders against a defendant following his acquittal if the court concludes it is necessary to do so to protect a person from harassment.
3. Nothing in this judgment seeks to cast any doubt on Mr Belfield's acquittal. I am required to consider a separate question under the statute- which is the need for any *future* protection even in cases where there has been an acquittal. That will require me to consider the evidence before the jury but nothing I say seeks to question their verdicts. I am applying the civil standard of proof in identifying the facts unlike the jury when determining the criminal charges.
4. The court may make orders which are either time limited or indefinite, but subject to the court's powers under section 5A (2B). At trial Counts 1-4 were grouped together because they related in part at least to the time Mr Belfield spent at BBC Radio Leeds and actions Mr Belfield took in relation to BBC employees thereafter. There were many common features of Mr Belfield's conduct in relation to these complainants and I will, in the interests of brevity, summarise my findings by reference to the common facts which emerged from the evidence. I will however also need to make reference in brief terms to evidence concerning particular complainants.
5. In coming to my decision I have taken into account the oral and written evidence presented to the jury. I also take into account that the nature of the future restraints which the Crown seek will interfere with Mr Belfield's Article 10 ECHR rights because they essentially seek to restrain speech and communications. Accordingly, I approach matters on the basis that the need for such future restraints must be convincingly established and the measures must satisfy a strict proportionality test. The court must balance the complainants' rights to private life under Article 8 of the ECHR against Mr Belfield's Article 10 rights.
6. Based on the oral and written evidence before me, I am satisfied that the orders are necessary and justified. Each of the complainants requires protection from Mr Belfield. I will explain my reasons.
7. The starting point is my findings in relation to past events. I note that the oral evidence of each of these witnesses was essentially uncontradicted by counter oral evidence. I also found them wholly honest, impressive and straightforward witnesses who have achieved substantial success in their fields. They were profoundly damaged by Mr Belfield's actions and they have had to seek assistance from medical professionals.

8. Each of them suffered a campaign of harassment by email and social media communications. Each of them suffered serious mental health problems arising from Mr Belfield's conduct. The longest periods of abuse were suffered by Ms Breen, Ms Thomas and Ms. Green. I find that in relation to Ms Breen and Ms. Thomas abusive emails running into the thousands were sent over about a 10 year period. In relation to Ms Green there were hundreds of emails. In relation to Ms Hirst there were not as many emails but there were highly offensive and transphobic social media posts and videos.
9. I accept the evidence of the complainants that although a relatively small number of emails were produced in court the policy they had been directed to follow was to delete any emails which Mr Belfield sent. These complainants did not respond to his emails, they did not engage with him in any way. In short, they did nothing in response to the barrage of communications, yet he continued to target and harass them over long periods of time.
10. I have not overlooked the fact that in many communications Mr Belfield was, aside from abuse, also making points on matters of public interest such as BBC use of resources and listening figures, as well as concerns about content. However, in his communications concerning these complainants he went far beyond that. His communications were often made to mass email audiences within the BBC, many of whom had nothing to do with the complainants. On occasions he made highly offensive and personal comments about their physical appearance, including sexualised comments, about them. The emails were often blind copied to them. I accept the evidence that Mr Belfield effectively "followed" these women by online harassment throughout their careers. Most distressing was that fact that many years after Mr Belfield had ceased to have anything to do with them professionally he would email very senior personnel in the BBC with wholly false allegations that Ms. Breen, Ms. Thomas and Ms Green had bullied him.
11. There was no escape for these complainants from Mr Belfield until the Nottinghamshire Police became involved in late 2020 and bail conditions prohibiting contact or references to these persons were imposed.
12. I find that these complainants were targeted by Mr Belfield because he held personal grudges against them. As regards Ms Breen and Ms Thomas, his former managers, he felt they had mistreated him during his brief period working at BBC Radio Leeds in 2010-2011. Mr Belfield also has a belief that women, as part of what he repeatedly called a "tick box" culture, were being promoted and given prominence within the BBC when he, as a person in his own view of real talent, was not being employed. I express no view as to this save to say that such holding such a belief does not provide a charter for harassment over 10 years.
13. As to Ms Green, he felt she had acted inappropriately towards him at the time when she was also a radio presenter at that station. She had continued to work at BBC Radio Leeds when Mr Belfield's contract had not been continued.

14. As regards Stephanie Hirst, Mr Belfield felt a personal insult when she declined an interview with him following her gender transition. That turned into a campaign of transphobic behaviour which at every turn led him to isolate her transgender status and to ridicule her in his comments and videos. I do not accept Mr Belfield's characterisation of his comments in relation to Ms Hirst as simple parody or comment of a comedic nature. They are more accurately described as transphobic and hateful comments. I find they were motivated in part at least by feelings of jealousy as to her success when his own career within the BBC had foundered. It is striking that Mr Belfield found it near impossible to make any communication concerning Ms Hirst without including highly offensive emojis about her transition.
15. In each of these cases, it was essentially a personal campaign of revenge which motivated him as opposed to some form of journalistic exercise of holding people within the BBC to account.
16. Applying the civil standard, I find that Mr Belfield carried out a historic course of conduct against each complainant which amounted to statutory harassment causing distress and alarm and that he ought to have known his actions amounted to harassment. I also find that based on the nature and extent of that conduct, on his police interviews and the nature of his defence in this trial, that there is a very substantial risk that absent a court restraint he is likely to continue such behaviour.
17. In my judgment, Mr Belfield's approach at trial did not indicate any appreciation of the extent to which he had damaged the mental health of these four women. An order which is indefinite in time is justified. I cannot on the evidence before me find that Mr Belfield is likely at any particular period in the future to have an appreciation of the inappropriateness of his past actions. The complainants' rights to a private life outweigh any freedom of speech right which Mr Belfield might claim to exercise. The terms of the Crown's draft orders, as discussed in court, are in my judgment sufficiently tailored to go no further than protecting the complainants' Article 8 rights to private life. They are proportionate and strike an appropriate balance. They do not impose any restraint on a legitimate exercise of Article 10 ECHR rights.
18. I will make indefinite restraining orders against Mr Belfield in favour of Rozina Breen, Helen Thomas, Liz Green and Stephanie Hirst under section 5A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
19. As regards each of these persons Mr Belfield is until further order prohibited from contacting, or attempting to contact, them by any means whether direct or indirect. He must not publish through any form of publication or electronic communication, any statement or other material relating to, or purporting to relate to them. He must not monitor the use by any of them of the internet, email, or any other form of electronic communication.

20. Any breach of those orders is a serious criminal offence with substantial criminal penalties which may include imprisonment of up to 5 years. Mr Belfield will be given a written record of the terms of the orders. If for any reason the orders are no longer necessary and appropriate then either Mr Belfield or the complainants may apply to the court for them to be amended or removed. But until that time, which may never come, they will remain in force and must be complied with to the letter.

21. Finally, I record that I consider each of these women acted with substantial courage and real fortitude in coming to court to give evidence in a public forum about matters which had very substantial negative mental health impacts upon them, over several years. The court's orders today are intended to provide them with protection, with criminal penalties for breach, against any repetition in the future of such conduct.