

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

[REDACTED]  
(By email)

Our Ref: MGLA040121-2827

21 December 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for information which the Greater London Authority (GLA) received on 1 January 2021. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Further to my email of 29 January answering your first two questions, we are now in a position to respond to the third part of your request. Please accept my apologies for the oversight and the long delay in responding.

You requested:

1. *Please provide a detailed breakdown of the costs of the New Years Eve drone display on 31 Dec 20.*
2. *Please confirm which budgets and sources of funding covered the cost.*
3. ***Please also provide minutes of internal meetings and copies of any email chains where the use of the BLM fist logo was discussed***

Our response to part 3 your request is below:

We have interpreted your request to be about the raised fist image, a well-recognised symbol of solidarity and support which has been prevalent across the BLM movement.

We conducted searches and located a number of emails, which are attached.

The GLA has withheld some information under the provisions of Section 43(2) of the FOI Act.

The withheld information relates to 4 email conversations between the GLA and the BBC regarding the BBC's editorial decision-making processes with respect to the use of logos, script and scheduling as part of the New Year's Event broadcast events.

This information, if disclosed, is likely to adversely affect the commercial interests of the BBC, noting that 'commercial interests' includes the viability of businesses.

The public interest balance lies in favour of maintaining the exemption, as the countervailing public interest should be protecting the journalistic and editorial integrity of the BBC, and not creating a back door to the journalism derogation.

Please note that some names of members of staff are exempt from disclosure under s.40 (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act. This information could potentially identify specific employees and as such constitutes as personal data which is defined by Article 4(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to mean any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual. It is considered that disclosure of this information would contravene the first data protection principle under Article 5(1) of GDPR which states that Personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference MGLA040121-2827.

Yours sincerely



**Information Governance Officer**

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the GLA's FOI complaints and internal review procedure, available at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:34  
**To:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Mail story on NYE drones

Ah yes, I do have the BBC contacts too. Forgot as [REDACTED] dealt with them while I was off. I'll forward on. Thanks

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:31  
**To:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Mail story on NYE drones  
Hi [REDACTED]

Sent this to [REDACTED], but presuming you might send to the BBC press/marketing contacts too? Can't immediately find their contacts here.

Ta  
[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:29  
**To:** [REDACTED]@bbc.co.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Mail story on NYE drones  
Hi [REDACTED]

As discussed, please see below info about the story the Daily Mail have posted, plus our initial response from the press office.

I'll let you know if any change to operational plans in response. Please note the request to point any queries to the Mayors Press Office email too.

Ta  
[REDACTED]

**Events for London**  
GREATERLONDONAUTHORITY  
City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA  
020 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]  
[london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk)  
[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk

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**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:20  
**To:** [REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Mail story on NYE drones

Hi both,

You may have seen a piece on the Mail Online this afternoon that says 300 drones are being used as part of a pre-recorded NYE show. There are a series of photos that were taken last night.

[https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter\\_dailymailUK](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK)

We've been asked by the Telegraph if the drones will be on show on NYE or if they were recorded last night to then be broadcast on NYE and deter people from gathering to watch them. We expect to have similar queries tonight and tomorrow.

We are not commenting and pointing journalists to the press release: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/special-broadcast-on-defining-moments-of-2020>

Can you point any queries you get to [MayorsPressOffice@london.gov.uk](mailto:MayorsPressOffice@london.gov.uk) please?

Thanks,



**The pre-recorded socially-distant light show to see in the New Year: Up to 300 DRONES illuminate the night sky over London as they form display paying tribute to NHS, Captain Tom, BLM and zoom meetings after Covid cancelled annual fireworks**

- New Year 2021 will be welcomed in with pre-recorded light show involving 300 drones over London
- It was filmed at 2am this morning and will be broadcast on BBC One on the night of New Year's Eve
- It will pay tribute to NHS staff and war veteran Captain Tom Moore's charity walk which raised £33m
- Display will also mark Zoom calls with phrase: 'You're on mute' and show Black Lives Matter fists logo
- No official fireworks event will take place in London on New Year's Eve due to coronavirus restrictions

The New Year will be welcomed in with a pre-recorded light show involving 300 drones over London which was filmed in the early hours of this morning, MailOnline can reveal with these exclusive photographs.

The display has been kept secret until now, with the drones flown over the River Thames at 2am to perform the ten-minute routine which will be broadcast on the night of New Year's Eve when the clock strikes midnight.

It will pay tribute to NHS staff for their work during the coronavirus crisis as well as 100-year-old war veteran Captain Tom Moore's charity walk which raised £33million for the NHS Charities Together organisation.

The display will also mark the shift to working from home during the pandemic with a nod towards Zoom video conferencing calls shown by an image of a crossed-out microphone and the phrase: 'You're on mute.'

And it will also show the Black Lives Matter clenched fists logo following months of anti-racism protests after black American man George Floyd was killed by a white police officer during an arrest in Minneapolis in May.

The show will also feature lasers and other lighting effects, but it has already been filmed this week and will now be put together to be shown as one sequence to millions of viewers tuning in from home on BBC One.

No official fireworks event will take place in London on New Year's Eve, while there will not be any other display in the capital as people are urged to stay home with the capital now in tier four during the coronavirus pandemic.

A support boat based at London Bridge accompanied the display which took place near The O2 in Greenwich in the early hours. The vessel was in place in case there was a mid-air collision or anything fell out of the sky.

A notice to airmen, more commonly known as a 'Notam', has been in place along the Thames in recent days. These warnings often go up for special events to alert aircraft pilots about potential hazards along a flight route.

Workers putting together the show are understood to have been practising over the past few nights with a smaller number of drones, before carrying out the performance with 300 of them early this morning.

The BBC schedule gives no indication as to what the display might entail, with programme details simply saying: 'As Big Ben strikes midnight, the nation comes together to welcome in the new year and light up the start of 2021.'

On December 18, Mr Khan promised a 'special broadcast to reflect on the defining moments of 2020 and a message of hope for the New Year' while warning Londoners and visitors to stay at home and not gather in the centre of the capital.

A press release issued by City Hall said the display 'will take the form of a special broadcast at midnight on BBC One as the capital remembers a challenging year for the country and looks ahead with hope to next year'.

It added that the whole show would only be able to be viewed on TV, so Londoners and visitors to the capital should watch it from home instead of gathering in London at midnight because there will be no public event.

More than 100,000 spectators usually gather to watch a spectacular fireworks display along the banks of the River Thames when Big Ben strikes midnight, with the event having been ticketed in recent years.

Mr Khan said: 'The Covid-19 pandemic has meant we are not able to put on our world-famous public event on the banks of the Thames this year, but it's important we reflect on and pay tribute to the defining moments of the year and look to 2021 with hope, and that's why we are replacing it with a unique broadcast on BBC One.'

'We know that New Year's Eve is traditionally an opportunity to show off our great city to the rest of the world, which we will still be doing this year in a show you'll only be able to watch from home, on the BBC.'

'It will be a celebration of hope, but also provide a moment of reflection on the challenges of this year and the way Londoners pulled together.'

'Tier Three restrictions for London remain in place (these have since been upgraded to Tier Four) and infection rates are rising once again, which is why there is no public event this year.'

'It's vital we all continue to stick to the rules to reduce the spread of the virus and I urge Londoners to stay safe by seeing in the new year watching BBC One from the comfort of their home with those they live or are bubbled with.' Yesterday, the group which represents NHS trusts in England urged members of the public to stick to coronavirus restrictions on New Year's Eve and beyond, as cases rise across the UK.

Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive of NHS Providers, said: 'The public should be under no illusions that this is one of the most challenging times for the NHS.

'It is vital that everyone heeds the new rules and restrictions in the run-up to the New Year and beyond. After all, it takes a lot longer to curb the spread of the virus than it does to contract it.

'But despite the difficulties the service is facing, there is hope. The vaccine is here and is being rolled out, hopefully to all vulnerable groups by late spring.'

Before the pandemic took hold in Britain, London Mayor Sadiq Khan had revealed in January that he had asked his team to 'look for new innovations' related to the New Year's Eve display and that drones were being considered.

Labour London Assembly member Leonie Cooper asked him on January 16: 'Has the Mayor investigated following Shanghai's example of using drones for some or all of the display to reduce the environmental impact and the distress caused to animals?'

And Mr Khan replied on January 22: 'London's large-scale, spectacular New Year's celebrations are seen across the UK and around the world, promoting our city to millions of people.

'I have asked my team to look for new innovations when planning for the 2020/21 New Year's Eve event. We have previously considered the inclusion of drone displays, but as Shanghai's display showed, there are significant limitations with currently available drones.

'They are sensitive to weather conditions, producing a much greater risk of cancellation, alongside higher costs. These limitations could be why Shanghai's drone display was not live but pre-recorded several days ahead of New Year's Eve.

'Never the less the team continue to look for options to improve and develop the display. In terms of the environmental impact of the fireworks, this is something we take seriously and always try to minimise.

'The impact is short lived, localised and minimal, with the emissions from the fireworks display roughly equivalent to 0.00006 per cent of London's annual NOx emissions, but this is of course something we keep in close review.'

Happy New Year Live! will be broadcast on BBC One from midnight on the night of New Year's Eve this Thursday

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]@bbc.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:46  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Mail story on NYE drones

Thanks [REDACTED]

Telegraph have been in contact with the BBC Corporate Press Office too, we aren't offering any comment either

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On 29 Dec 2020, at 17:37, [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk> wrote:

Copying in [REDACTED] too.

Thanks

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**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:29

**To:** [REDACTED]@bbc.co.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Subject:** FW: Mail story on NYE drones

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As discussed, please see below info about the story the Daily Mail have posted, plus our initial response from the press office.

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Ta

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] **Events for London**

**GREATERLONDONAUTHORITY**

City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA

020 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]

[london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk)

[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk

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**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:20

**To:** [REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]@Jackmorton.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 18:38  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Mail story on NYE drones

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for the update. And yes, we'll point any queries to that address, and will also let you know should we receive any.

Many thanks  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:20  
**To:** [REDACTED]@Jackmorton.co.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Mail story on NYE drones

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- ☐ New Year 2021 will be welcomed in with pre-recorded light show involving 300 drones over London
- ☐ It was filmed at 2am this morning and will be broadcast on BBC One on the night of New Year's Eve

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:05  
**To:** Leah Kreitzman; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Patrick Hennessy; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Telegraph - Mail story on NYE drones

Hi

Yes pointing to release fine for now

Thanks

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**From:** Leah Kreitzman [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 29, 2020 4:56:53 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Patrick Hennessy [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Telegraph - Mail story on NYE drones

Hi - I think sensible not to comment, push them towards the release and really stress the point that we need to try to avoid people crowding to see anything on NYE.

Thanks

L

On 29 Dec 2020, at 16:47, [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi all,

[REDACTED] at the Telegraph has been in touch asking about a Mail Online story that says 300 drones are being used as part of a pre-recorded NYE show. There are a series of photos that were taken last night. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter> dailymailUK

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Shall we not comment and just point them to the press release? <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/special-broadcast-on-defining-moments-of-2020>

The line in our SK brief for anything getting out is:

**Q: (If any leaks) Is it true that (a certain venue) is going to be involved in the show?**

Restrictions put in place, as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, means it is not possible to stage any large events in the city. There will be no public event this year, instead there will be a unique ~~live~~ broadcast, which will capture the best of 2020 and allow us to look forward to 2021 with renewed optimism and hope. Tier 4 restrictions mean that we must 'stay at home' – and I urge Londoners to follow the restrictions. It's really important that, with cases rising, all Londoners follow these restrictions to help protect our neighbours, friends and family.

Thanks,  
[REDACTED]



**The pre-recorded socially-distant light show to see in the New Year: Up to 300 DRONES illuminate the night sky over London as they form display paying tribute to NHS, Captain Tom, BLM and zoom meetings after Covid cancelled annual fireworks**

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The display will also mark the shift to working from home during the pandemic with a nod towards Zoom video conferencing calls shown by an image of a crossed-out microphone and the phrase: 'You're on mute.'

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It added that the whole show would only be able to be viewed on TV, so Londoners and visitors to the capital should watch it from home instead of gathering in London at midnight because there will be no public event.

More than 100,000 spectators usually gather to watch a spectacular fireworks display along the banks of the River Thames when Big Ben strikes midnight, with the event having been ticketed in recent years.

Mr Khan said: 'The Covid-19 pandemic has meant we are not able to put on our world-famous public event on the banks of the Thames this year, but it's important we reflect on and pay tribute to the defining moments of the year and look to 2021 with hope, and that's why we are replacing it with a unique broadcast on BBC One.

'We know that New Year's Eve is traditionally an opportunity to show off our great city to the rest of the world, which we will still be doing this year in a show you'll only be able to watch from home, on the BBC.

'It will be a celebration of hope, but also provide a moment of reflection on the challenges of this year and the way Londoners pulled together.

'Tier Three restrictions for London remain in place (these have since been upgraded to Tier Four) and infection rates are rising once again, which is why there is no public event this year.

'It's vital we all continue to stick to the rules to reduce the spread of the virus and I urge Londoners to stay safe by seeing in the new year watching BBC One from the comfort of their home with those they live or are bubbled with.'

Yesterday, the group which represents NHS trusts in England urged members of the public to stick to coronavirus restrictions on New Year's Eve and beyond, as cases rise across the UK.

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'It is vital that everyone heeds the new rules and restrictions in the run-up to the New Year and beyond. After all, it takes a lot longer to curb the spread of the virus than it does to contract it.

'But despite the difficulties the service is facing, there is hope. The vaccine is here and is being rolled out, hopefully to all vulnerable groups by late spring.'

Before the pandemic took hold in Britain, London Mayor Sadiq Khan had revealed in January that he had asked his team to 'look for new innovations' related to the New Year's Eve display and that drones were being considered.

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Happy New Year Live! will be broadcast on BBC One from midnight on the night of New Year's Eve this Thursday

## **NYE 2020**

On New Year's Eve 2020, London welcomed in 2021 with a unique fireworks, lighting and drone show broadcast live on BBC One.

The special broadcast event was organised by the Mayor of London in place of the annual public fireworks display, which could not take place due to the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions.

2020 was one of the most challenging years in living memory for both our city and the country. The unique 10-minute show at midnight paid tribute to the NHS, who continue to work tirelessly to save lives, and heroes like Captain Sir Tom Moore, who lifted our spirits and helped raise millions of pounds for the NHS. It recognised the importance and impact of the Black Lives Matter movement on millions of people's lives. The show also looked forward in hope to the new year, concluding with a message from Sir David Attenborough.

The show was watched by a record number of people across the country and world.

### **Costs**

The total budget for the New Year's Eve show was £1.5m. This was funded through the GLA events budget and was substantially less than in previous years. The final costs are not yet held – they are still being calculated and will be within the allocated budget.

Further breakdown of this budget amount is not available because a) the final itemised spend is still being fully reconciled; and b) release of the detailed costs would unduly jeopardise a fair and competitive procurement process being planned for future events.

### **Show theme**

2020 was one of the toughest years in living memory for Londoners and people across the country. Throughout such a difficult period Londoners have stood together and supported one another. The creative theme of the show reflected what happened this year and the spirit that kept Londoners going. These moments included the fundraising efforts of Captain Sir Tom Moore, the public support for the NHS in its efforts to fight Covid-19, the importance and impact of the Black Lives Matter movement for racial equity, and the culmination of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Sections within the drone display were designed to show recognisable images which best represented some of these themes. This included the NHS logo, an image of Captain Sir Tom Moore waving, a nightingale for the Nightingale Hospital, and also raised fists, a long-recognised symbol of solidarity and support which was prevalent across the city this year as London once again proudly stood united against racism.

The Mayor gave final approval for the show during December.

The event was produced on behalf of the Mayor of London and the GLA by Jack Morton Worldwide. Companies involved in delivering the core creative elements of the show were On the Sly, Titanium Fireworks, Durham Marengi Lighting, Signify and SKYMAGIC

### **Fireworks**

The fireworks used in the display were on a much lower scale to those used in previous New Year's Eve events. Environmental assessment of the fireworks identified that the combustion by-products of the display (NO<sub>x</sub>, CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub>) were reduced to 31% of those created by the previous New Year's Eve display. These calculations are attached.

The GLA does not hold information about how the fireworks were transported, or from where.

# London NYE - environmental calculations

These calculations have been carried out by CarnDu Ltd and reflect current industry good practice and information provided by firework manufacturers and equipment suppliers

CarnDu



Display description			Combustion byproducts (kg) (Note 1)				Carbon offsets or equivalences (CO/CO2)			Pollution equivalences (NOx/SO2)
	Description	NEC	NOx	CO/CO2	SO2	Solids (Note 2)	Trees planted	Car (km)	Generator (Note 3)	Car (km)
2020	Single Barge on River Thames	318.0	5.72	74.41	1.27	251.38				
	Wembley Arch Rainbow	46.0	0.83	10.76	0.18	36.36				
	Tower Bridge inc. Waterfall	77.0	1.4	18.02	0.31	60.87				
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>441.0</b>	<b>7.95</b>	<b>103.19</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>348.61</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>35933</b>
2019	London Eye plus 3 x barges (10 minutes)	1390.0	25.02	325.26	5.56	1098	1.2	2561	500	113260

## NOTES:

- 1 Does not include non polluting gasses such as N<sub>2</sub>
- 2 This only includes aerial, non water-soluble, solids (eg Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>,
- 3 The number of minutes a 60kVA generator needs to run to be equivalent

Overall the 2020 display was approximately 31% the scale of the 2019 display and contributed 31% of the combustion by-products

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:34  
**To:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Mail story on NYE drones

Ah yes, I do have the BBC contacts too. Forgot as [REDACTED] dealt with them while I was off. I'll forward on. Thanks

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:31  
**To:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Mail story on NYE drones  
Hi [REDACTED]

Sent this to [REDACTED], but presuming you might send to the BBC press/marketing contacts too? Can't immediately find their contacts here.

Ta

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:29  
**To:** [REDACTED]@bbc.co.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Mail story on NYE drones  
Hi [REDACTED]

As discussed, please see below info about the story the Daily Mail have posted, plus our initial response from the press office.

I'll let you know if any change to operational plans in response. Please note the request to point any queries to the Mayors Press Office email too.

Ta

[REDACTED] **Events for London**  
GREATERLONDONAUTHORITY  
City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA  
020 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]  
[london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk)  
[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:20  
**To:** [REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Mail story on NYE drones

Hi both,

You may have seen a piece on the Mail Online this afternoon that says 300 drones are being used as part of a pre-recorded NYE show. There are a series of photos that were taken last night.

[https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter\\_dailymailUK](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK)

We've been asked by the Telegraph if the drones will be on show on NYE or if they were recorded last night to then be broadcast on NYE and deter people from gathering to watch them. We expect to have similar queries tonight and tomorrow.

We are not commenting and pointing journalists to the press release: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/special-broadcast-on-defining-moments-of-2020>



Can you point any queries you get to [MayorsPressOffice@london.gov.uk](mailto:MayorsPressOffice@london.gov.uk) please?

Thanks,



**The pre-recorded socially-distant light show to see in the New Year: Up to 300 DRONES illuminate the night sky over London as they form display paying tribute to NHS, Captain Tom, BLM and zoom meetings after Covid cancelled annual fireworks**

- New Year 2021 will be welcomed in with pre-recorded light show involving 300 drones over London
- It was filmed at 2am this morning and will be broadcast on BBC One on the night of New Year's Eve
- It will pay tribute to NHS staff and war veteran Captain Tom Moore's charity walk which raised £33m
- Display will also mark Zoom calls with phrase: 'You're on mute' and show Black Lives Matter fists logo
- No official fireworks event will take place in London on New Year's Eve due to coronavirus restrictions

The New Year will be welcomed in with a pre-recorded light show involving 300 drones over London which was filmed in the early hours of this morning, MailOnline can reveal with these exclusive photographs.

The display has been kept secret until now, with the drones flown over the River Thames at 2am to perform the ten-minute routine which will be broadcast on the night of New Year's Eve when the clock strikes midnight.

It will pay tribute to NHS staff for their work during the coronavirus crisis as well as 100-year-old war veteran Captain Tom Moore's charity walk which raised £33million for the NHS Charities Together organisation.

The display will also mark the shift to working from home during the pandemic with a nod towards Zoom video conferencing calls shown by an image of a crossed-out microphone and the phrase: 'You're on mute.'

And it will also show the Black Lives Matter clenched fists logo following months of anti-racism protests after black American man George Floyd was killed by a white police officer during an arrest in Minneapolis in May.

The show will also feature lasers and other lighting effects, but it has already been filmed this week and will now be put together to be shown as one sequence to millions of viewers tuning in from home on BBC One.

No official fireworks event will take place in London on New Year's Eve, while there will not be any other display in the capital as people are urged to stay home with the capital now in tier four during the coronavirus pandemic.

A support boat based at London Bridge accompanied the display which took place near The O2 in Greenwich in the early hours. The vessel was in place in case there was a mid-air collision or anything fell out of the sky.

A notice to airmen, more commonly known as a 'Notam', has been in place along the Thames in recent days. These warnings often go up for special events to alert aircraft pilots about potential hazards along a flight route.

Workers putting together the show are understood to have been practising over the past few nights with a smaller number of drones, before carrying out the performance with 300 of them early this morning.

The BBC schedule gives no indication as to what the display might entail, with programme details simply saying: 'As Big Ben strikes midnight, the nation comes together to welcome in the new year and light up the start of 2021.'

On December 18, Mr Khan promised a 'special broadcast to reflect on the defining moments of 2020 and a message of hope for the New Year' while warning Londoners and visitors to stay at home and not gather in the centre of the capital.

A press release issued by City Hall said the display 'will take the form of a special broadcast at midnight on BBC One as the capital remembers a challenging year for the country and looks ahead with hope to next year'.

It added that the whole show would only be able to be viewed on TV, so Londoners and visitors to the capital should watch it from home instead of gathering in London at midnight because there will be no public event.

More than 100,000 spectators usually gather to watch a spectacular fireworks display along the banks of the River Thames when Big Ben strikes midnight, with the event having been ticketed in recent years.

Mr Khan said: 'The Covid-19 pandemic has meant we are not able to put on our world-famous public event on the banks of the Thames this year, but it's important we reflect on and pay tribute to the defining moments of the year and look to 2021 with hope, and that's why we are replacing it with a unique broadcast on BBC One.'

'We know that New Year's Eve is traditionally an opportunity to show off our great city to the rest of the world, which we will still be doing this year in a show you'll only be able to watch from home, on the BBC.'

'It will be a celebration of hope, but also provide a moment of reflection on the challenges of this year and the way Londoners pulled together.'

'Tier Three restrictions for London remain in place (these have since been upgraded to Tier Four) and infection rates are rising once again, which is why there is no public event this year.'

'It's vital we all continue to stick to the rules to reduce the spread of the virus and I urge Londoners to stay safe by seeing in the new year watching BBC One from the comfort of their home with those they live or are bubbled with.' Yesterday, the group which represents NHS trusts in England urged members of the public to stick to coronavirus restrictions on New Year's Eve and beyond, as cases rise across the UK.

Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive of NHS Providers, said: 'The public should be under no illusions that this is one of the most challenging times for the NHS.

'It is vital that everyone heeds the new rules and restrictions in the run-up to the New Year and beyond. After all, it takes a lot longer to curb the spread of the virus than it does to contract it.

'But despite the difficulties the service is facing, there is hope. The vaccine is here and is being rolled out, hopefully to all vulnerable groups by late spring.'

Before the pandemic took hold in Britain, London Mayor Sadiq Khan had revealed in January that he had asked his team to 'look for new innovations' related to the New Year's Eve display and that drones were being considered.

Labour London Assembly member Leonie Cooper asked him on January 16: 'Has the Mayor investigated following Shanghai's example of using drones for some or all of the display to reduce the environmental impact and the distress caused to animals?'

And Mr Khan replied on January 22: 'London's large-scale, spectacular New Year's celebrations are seen across the UK and around the world, promoting our city to millions of people.

'I have asked my team to look for new innovations when planning for the 2020/21 New Year's Eve event. We have previously considered the inclusion of drone displays, but as Shanghai's display showed, there are significant limitations with currently available drones.

'They are sensitive to weather conditions, producing a much greater risk of cancellation, alongside higher costs. These limitations could be why Shanghai's drone display was not live but pre-recorded several days ahead of New Year's Eve.

'Never the less the team continue to look for options to improve and develop the display. In terms of the environmental impact of the fireworks, this is something we take seriously and always try to minimise.

'The impact is short lived, localised and minimal, with the emissions from the fireworks display roughly equivalent to 0.00006 per cent of London's annual NOx emissions, but this is of course something we keep in close review.'

Happy New Year Live! will be broadcast on BBC One from midnight on the night of New Year's Eve this Thursday

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@bbc.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:46  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Mail story on NYE drones

Thanks [REDACTED]

Telegraph have been in contact with the BBC Corporate Press Office too, we aren't offering any comment either

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On 29 Dec 2020, at 17:37, [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk> wrote:

Copying in [REDACTED] too.

Thanks

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:29

**To:** [REDACTED]@bbc.co.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Subject:** FW: Mail story on NYE drones

Hi [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] **Events for London**

**GREATERLONDONAUTHORITY**

City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA

020 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]

[london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk)

[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:20

**To:** [REDACTED]@Jackmorton.co.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Mail story on NYE drones

Hi both,

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[https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter\\_dailymailUK](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter_dailymailUK)

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@Jackmorton.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 18:38  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Mail story on NYE drones

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for the update. And yes, we'll point any queries to that address, and will also let you know should we receive any.

Many thanks  
[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:20  
**To:** [REDACTED]@Jackmorton.co.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@jackmorton.co.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Mail story on NYE drones

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Thanks,  
[REDACTED]

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- ☐ New Year 2021 will be welcomed in with pre-recorded light show involving 300 drones over London
- ☐ It was filmed at 2am this morning and will be broadcast on BBC One on the night of New Year's Eve



[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 17:05  
**To:** Leah Kreitzman; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Patrick Hennessy; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Telegraph - Mail story on NYE drones

Hi

Yes pointing to release fine for now

Thanks

---

**From:** Leah Kreitzman [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 29, 2020 4:56:53 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Patrick Hennessy [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Telegraph - Mail story on NYE drones

Hi - I think sensible not to comment, push them towards the release and really stress the point that we need to try to avoid people crowding to see anything on NYE.

Thanks

L

On 29 Dec 2020, at 16:47, [REDACTED]@london.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi all,

[REDACTED] at the Telegraph has been in touch asking about a Mail Online story that says 300 drones are being used as part of a pre-recorded NYE show. There are a series of photos that were taken last night. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9095795/Pre-recorded-socially-distant-light-New-Year.html?ito=social-twitter> dailymailUK

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Shall we not comment and just point them to the press release? <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/special-broadcast-on-defining-moments-of-2020>

The line in our SK brief for anything getting out is:

**Q: (If any leaks) Is it true that (a certain venue) is going to be involved in the show?**

Restrictions put in place, as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, means it is not possible to stage any large events in the city. There will be no public event this year, instead there will be a unique ~~live~~ broadcast, which will capture the best of 2020 and allow us to look forward to 2021 with renewed optimism and hope. Tier 4 restrictions mean that we must 'stay at home' – and I urge Londoners to follow the restrictions. It's really important that, with cases rising, all Londoners follow these restrictions to help protect our neighbours, friends and family.

Thanks,  
[REDACTED]



**The pre-recorded socially-distant light show to see in the New Year: Up to 300 DRONES illuminate the night sky over London as they form display paying tribute to NHS, Captain Tom, BLM and zoom meetings after Covid cancelled annual fireworks**

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2. It was filmed at 2am this morning and will be broadcast on BBC One on the night of New Year's Eve
3. It will pay tribute to NHS staff and war veteran Captain Tom Moore's charity walk which raised £33m
4. Display will also mark Zoom calls with phrase: 'You're on mute' and show Black Lives Matter fists logo
5. No official fireworks event will take place in London on New Year's Eve due to coronavirus restrictions

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Mr Khan said: 'The Covid-19 pandemic has meant we are not able to put on our world-famous public event on the banks of the Thames this year, but it's important we reflect on and pay tribute to the defining moments of the year and look to 2021 with hope, and that's why we are replacing it with a unique broadcast on BBC One.

'We know that New Year's Eve is traditionally an opportunity to show off our great city to the rest of the world, which we will still be doing this year in a show you'll only be able to watch from home, on the BBC.

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Happy New Year Live! will be broadcast on BBC One from midnight on the night of New Year's Eve this Thursday

## **NYE 2020**

On New Year's Eve 2020, London welcomed in 2021 with a unique fireworks, lighting and drone show broadcast live on BBC One.

The special broadcast event was organised by the Mayor of London in place of the annual public fireworks display, which could not take place due to the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions.

2020 was one of the most challenging years in living memory for both our city and the country. The unique 10-minute show at midnight paid tribute to the NHS, who continue to work tirelessly to save lives, and heroes like Captain Sir Tom Moore, who lifted our spirits and helped raise millions of pounds for the NHS. It recognised the importance and impact of the Black Lives Matter movement on millions of people's lives. The show also looked forward in hope to the new year, concluding with a message from Sir David Attenborough.

The show was watched by a record number of people across the country and world.

### **Costs**

The total budget for the New Year's Eve show was £1.5m. This was funded through the GLA events budget and was substantially less than in previous years. The final costs are not yet held – they are still being calculated and will be within the allocated budget.

Further breakdown of this budget amount is not available because a) the final itemised spend is still being fully reconciled; and b) release of the detailed costs would unduly jeopardise a fair and competitive procurement process being planned for future events.

### **Show theme**

2020 was one of the toughest years in living memory for Londoners and people across the country. Throughout such a difficult period Londoners have stood together and supported one another. The creative theme of the show reflected what happened this year and the spirit that kept Londoners going. These moments included the fundraising efforts of Captain Sir Tom Moore, the public support for the NHS in its efforts to fight Covid-19, the importance and impact of the Black Lives Matter movement for racial equity, and the culmination of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Sections within the drone display were designed to show recognisable images which best represented some of these themes. This included the NHS logo, an image of Captain Sir Tom Moore waving, a nightingale for the Nightingale Hospital, and also raised fists, a long-recognised symbol of solidarity and support which was prevalent across the city this year as London once again proudly stood united against racism.

The Mayor gave final approval for the show during December.

The event was produced on behalf of the Mayor of London and the GLA by Jack Morton Worldwide. Companies involved in delivering the core creative elements of the show were On the Sly, Titanium Fireworks, Durham Marengi Lighting, Signify and SKYMAGIC

### **Fireworks**

The fireworks used in the display were on a much lower scale to those used in previous New Year's Eve events. Environmental assessment of the fireworks identified that the combustion by-products of the display (NO<sub>x</sub>, CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub>) were reduced to 31% of those created by the previous New Year's Eve display. These calculations are attached.

The GLA does not hold information about how the fireworks were transported, or from where.

# London NYE - environmental calculations

These calculations have been carried out by CarnDu Ltd and reflect current industry good practice and information provided by firework manufacturers and equipment suppliers

CarnDu



Display description			Combustion byproducts (kg) (Note 1)				Carbon offsets or equivalences (CO/CO2)			Pollution equivalences (NOx/SO2)
	Description	NEC	NOx	CO/CO2	SO2	Solids (Note 2)	Trees planted	Car (km)	Generator (Note 3)	Car (km)
2020	Single Barge on River Thames	318.0	5.72	74.41	1.27	251.38				
	Wembley Arch Rainbow	46.0	0.83	10.76	0.18	36.36				
	Tower Bridge inc. Waterfall	77.0	1.4	18.02	0.31	60.87				
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>441.0</b>	<b>7.95</b>	<b>103.19</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>348.61</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>35933</b>
2019	London Eye plus 3 x barges (10 minutes)	1390.0	25.02	325.26	5.56	1098	1.2	2561	500	113260

## NOTES:

- 1 Does not include non polluting gasses such as N<sub>2</sub>
- 2 This only includes aerial, non water-soluble, solids (eg Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>,
- 3 The number of minutes a 60kVA generator needs to run to be equivalent

Overall the 2020 display was approximately 31% the scale of the 2019 display and contributed 31% of the combustion by-products