

**THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE CULTURE AND PRACTICES OF SOUL  
SURVIVOR AS THEY RELATE TO THE ALLEGATIONS MADE CONCERNING MIKE  
PILAVACHI**

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**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

21<sup>st</sup> November 2023

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Background

1. Soul Survivor (Charity Number 1080720 and referred to as “Soul Survivor Festivals”), Soul61 (Charity Number 1144249) and Soul Survivor Watford (Charity Number 1184088 (“SSW”)) (all three together referred to as “Soul Survivor”) have commissioned Fiona Scolding KC to lead a team consisting of herself and Ben Fullbrook (a barrister) (hereafter “the Reviewers”) to conduct an Independent Review of the evidence produced following the allegations made and investigated jointly by the Church of England’s National Safeguarding Team (“NST”) and the St Albans Diocese by numerous individuals against Mike Pilavachi.
  
2. Mike Pilavachi was a youth pastor at St Andrews, Chorleywood from where, in 1993, he planted a new church called Soul Survivor Watford (“SSW”). This is an Anglican church based in former warehouse premises in Watford. Until 2014, SSW was informally part of the Church of England via the permission of the then Vicar of St Peter’s Church, North Watford. In 2014 SSW became a Bishops Mission Order in the Diocese of St Albans. Mike Pilavachi is the founder, previous leader and was until recently, an associate pastor of SSW. Soul Survivor is perhaps best known for running

annual summer festivals from 1993-2019 under a separate charity, Soul Survivor Festivals, which were aimed at 12–18-year-olds and attended by up to 35,000 people each summer. Soul Survivor, since 2011 through Soul61, also ran a number of religious gap year courses, previously known as Bodybuilders and Soultime but latterly as Soul61 as well as programmes for interns.

3. In 2013, Mike Pilavachi was ordained in the Church of England. In 2016 Mike Pilavachi was made an Honorary Canon of St Albans Cathedral and in 2019 he was made an MBE for services to young people. In 2020 he received an award from the Archbishop of Canterbury for his outstanding contribution to evangelism and discipleship amongst young people in the United Kingdom. Today, Soul Survivor has a family of linked churches in this country and abroad.
4. In carrying out this review, the Reviewers will consider the extent to which the conduct specified in these allegations was, whether tacitly or explicitly, enabled, condoned or exacerbated by the past and present culture and practices of Soul Survivor and/or deficiencies in the governance, policies, practices, arrangements and oversight by the Trustees of Soul Survivor, others in leadership positions within Soul Survivor, and those who had oversight of Soul Survivor in respect of their governance.
5. The allegations which are the subject of this review have been considered by the NST and the St Albans Diocese who have investigated and reached conclusions on safeguarding concerns and how others responded to concerns raised with them in accordance with the Church of England’s internal guidance.
6. On 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023, upon the conclusion of the internal Church of England investigation the Church of England announced that: “Having explored the

safeguarding concerns fully, according to House of Bishops guidance, the investigation team has concluded that they are substantiated. These relate to conduct in his leadership and ministry, both before and after he was ordained in 2012, spanning 40 years from his time as a youth leader through to current day”.

7. The overall substantiated concerns are described as an abuse of power relating to his ministry, and spiritual abuse; described in guidance as ‘a form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context’. It was concluded that he used his spiritual authority to control people and that his coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and massaging of young male interns.”
8. The internal process operated by the Diocese working with the NST was a safeguarding investigation, which was not about establishing guilt and was not an HR or disciplinary process. Its purpose, according to House of Bishops guidance, was to examine the safeguarding concerns surrounding Mike Pilavachi’s behaviour and ministry and asked the question: Is Mike Pilavachi ‘safe’ clergy to minister today?
9. If, during the course of this review or arising from its findings and recommendations, there is discovery of criminal activity or further allegations of safeguarding breaches, these will be passed to the police or the Local Authority Designated Officer for Hertfordshire, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and the National Safeguarding Team. Any discoveries that require urgent action, but which do not meet thresholds would be communicated to the Trustees of Soul Survivor Watford for them to action according to their internal procedures. The process of the review is not to determine if Mike Pilavachi has breached any safeguarding guidance, measures or practices or has

acted contrary to his role as pastor for the purposes of clergy discipline measure and/or other internal Diocesan or Church of England internal procedures.

10. Whilst the time period concerned by this review is long (dating back to the early 1990s), it is not a review of Soul Survivor (generally) or its general safeguarding practices (in particular at the festivals organised by Soul Survivor) but is focussed upon the allegations made against Mike Pilavachi and the response (or failure to respond or to notice such behaviours) to such allegations.

### **Independence**

11. The review shall be conducted independently of all third parties including the Trustees of Soul Survivor, the Church of England and any charity or person associated with them. The Reviewers shall decide how to conduct the review and upon the content of any reports.

### **Terms of review**

12. The **purpose** of the review is to:
  - (a) Consider the allegations against Mike Pilavachi and understand the extent to which they demonstrate poor safeguarding practice or the abuse of power because of the pastoral responsibility held by Mike Pilavachi at the times in question.
  - (b) Understand the scope and prevalence of past and current harmful experiences that have arisen as a result of any poor safeguarding practice or the abuse of power (making decisions on the balance of probabilities).

- (c) Understand what was known about any allegations made and/or what steps (if any) were taken, by whom, and when to address concerns raised or allegations made from 1993 – date concerning Mike Pilavachi.
- (d) Understand the extent of compliance with the legislation in force at the time, any statutory guidance applicable to the organisation, any Church of England measures, guidance or procedures and general safeguarding practice in place at the time in question and the adequacy of the policies and guidance in place within Soul Survivor or other organisations with oversight of Soul Survivor (if any) to meet such practice and guidance.
- (e) Understand the values, practices, culture and processes in place within Soul Survivor at the time in question in respect of safeguarding and the abuse of power by those in positions of ministerial responsibility and how this affected how safeguarding allegations were handled, including whether Mike Pilavachi was, or was not, challenged when issues were raised (and /or if the values practices and processes in place at the time within Soul Survivor acted to inhibit the reporting of such concerns or to an absence of oversight or accountability of Mike Pilavachi).
- (f) Consider the extent to which the conduct specified in the allegations against Mike Pilavachi was, whether tacitly or explicitly, enabled, condoned or exacerbated by the past and present culture and practices of Soul Survivor and/or deficiencies in the governance, policies, practices, arrangements and oversight by the Trustees of Soul Survivor, others in leadership positions within Soul Survivor, and those who had oversight of Soul Survivor in respect of their

governance, such as the Diocese or other church bodies.

- (g) Apply the learning from the above to improve practice and safeguarding arrangements.
- (h) Assess the current safeguarding arrangements and culture as far as it still demonstrates failures which would allow further safeguarding failures to take place in respect of lack of ministerial oversight and/or challenge and make recommendations to improve any deficiencies identified.

13. The **scope** of the review:-

- (a) Focuses exclusively upon the activities of Soul Survivor, insofar as they relate to Mike Pilavachi and those with whom he had direct contact or relationship.
- (b) Provides an opportunity for those who are alleged to have been harmed by their involvement with Mike Pilavachi to have their voices heard and for Mike Pilavachi to have a full and informed opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- (c) The review will also consider the effectiveness of Soul Survivor's responses when concerns were raised, the extent to which policies, procedures and best practice were followed, and the extent to which the safeguarding arrangements currently in place minimise the risk of recurrence of such concerns.
- (d) Seeks to identify learning from the past to shape future development of safeguarding practice.

### **Individual complaints/referral to statutory authorities**

14. The review shall only consider matters which concern Soul Survivor and shall not determine the merits or outcome of any individual complaints made. The Reviewers cannot determine if events did or did not occur or make any findings of fact as to any individual allegations.

### **Evidence gathering**

15. The Reviewers shall:-
- (a) Liaise with the NST and the St Albans Diocese to seek the consent (on an informed basis) of those who have already provided relevant evidence to the NST and/or and the St Albans Diocese to allow it to be released to the Reviewers.
  - (b) The Reviewers shall invite information (whether in oral or written form) from Mike Pilavachi as well as any organisation or individuals they consider appropriate.
16. The Reviewers cannot compel the production of information or the interviewing of any individual or organisation.
17. The Reviewers may ask questions about the information provided to the review to corroborate, test or investigate it and may make reference to such in the final report.

### **Support**

18. Those who have come forward to the NST and the St Albans Diocese have, where appropriate, already been offered support. People have the ability to continue to

approach the NST and the St Albans Diocese and they will continue, where appropriate, to be offered support. If any person does not wish to approach the NST or the St Albans Diocese and is in need of support, then the Reviewers will refer them to 31:8 so that, where appropriate, support can be offered.

### **Final Report**

19. At the conclusion of the review, the Reviewers shall produce a final written report which shall be provided to Soul Survivor. To demonstrate openness and transparency, Soul Survivor will publish the report, subject to any relevant legal considerations. The Reviewers shall complete the report in a timely manner.

### **Identification**

20. The Reviewers will not name any complainant or those who make allegations against Mike Pilavachi to him during the course of the review save with their express consent to do so. They will not be named in any final report save where they give their consent to be so named to the Reviewers in writing. The Reviewers will also take all reasonable steps to prevent identification by way of “jigsaw identification”. Any organisation involved in the management or oversight of Soul Survivor and Mike Pilavachi shall be named in the report, save where there are legal and/or reasons of confidentiality and/or other compelling justification for not naming them. People involved in the organisation may be named in the report if reasonably necessary to fulfil the purpose of the Review.
21. Anyone who is the subject of significant criticism within the report shall be given an opportunity to comment upon such criticism in writing prior to the finalisation of the report. The Reviewers may, but are not compelled to, amend the draft report as a result of any comments or concerns raised.



## **Implementation of Recommendations**

22. The Trustees of Soul Survivor shall carefully consider the recommendations by the Reviewers and determine the manner in which any recommendations are to be taken forward and implemented, within 3 months of receipt of the final report by way of publishing a response identifying how any recommendations are being implemented and the timescales for such implementation.

## **Confidentiality**

23. The Reviewers shall keep confidential all confidential information disclosed as a result of the Review and shall not use or disclose the same save as set out below or as required by law.
24. The Reviewers shall ensure that all information provided via safeguarding complaints and/or information which was subject to safeguarding investigations is kept confidential and is processed in accordance with best practice for such information and in line with the data processing notices which shall be provided upon request.
25. All information submitted to the Reviewers shall be held confidentially on a server which is secure and independent of Soul Survivor.
26. Information can only be accessed by the Reviewers and any adviser and/or support staff required to view the information.
27. Information shall always be processed in line with the Information Commissioner guidance, the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.
28. The Reviewers shall not share any evidence received by themselves with Soul Survivor

or any other third party save where a decision has been taken to disclose information for the specific purposes set out in the terms of reference.

29. Any individual who submits any information to the review shall not be mentioned by name or otherwise identified in any report produced for the purposes of this review unless they have given their express written consent to such identification to the Reviewers.
30. Any other person who wishes to submit information anonymously shall explain in writing at the time of submitting information why they wish to submit information anonymously and the Reviewers will consider whether they are able to agree to this or will seek further information to understand why the request has been made.
31. At the completion of the Review, any information held by the Reviewers shall be retained only as long as it is required for the purposes of the Review.
32. The Reviewers shall name all organisations in the final report save where such do not need to be named in order to fulfil the terms of reference.