Peter Mandelson sent Cabinet ministers covert tracking links during Oxford vote campaign

mirror.co.uk/news/politics/peter-mandelson-cabinet-ministers-tracking-37238010

Liam Doyle June 4, 2026

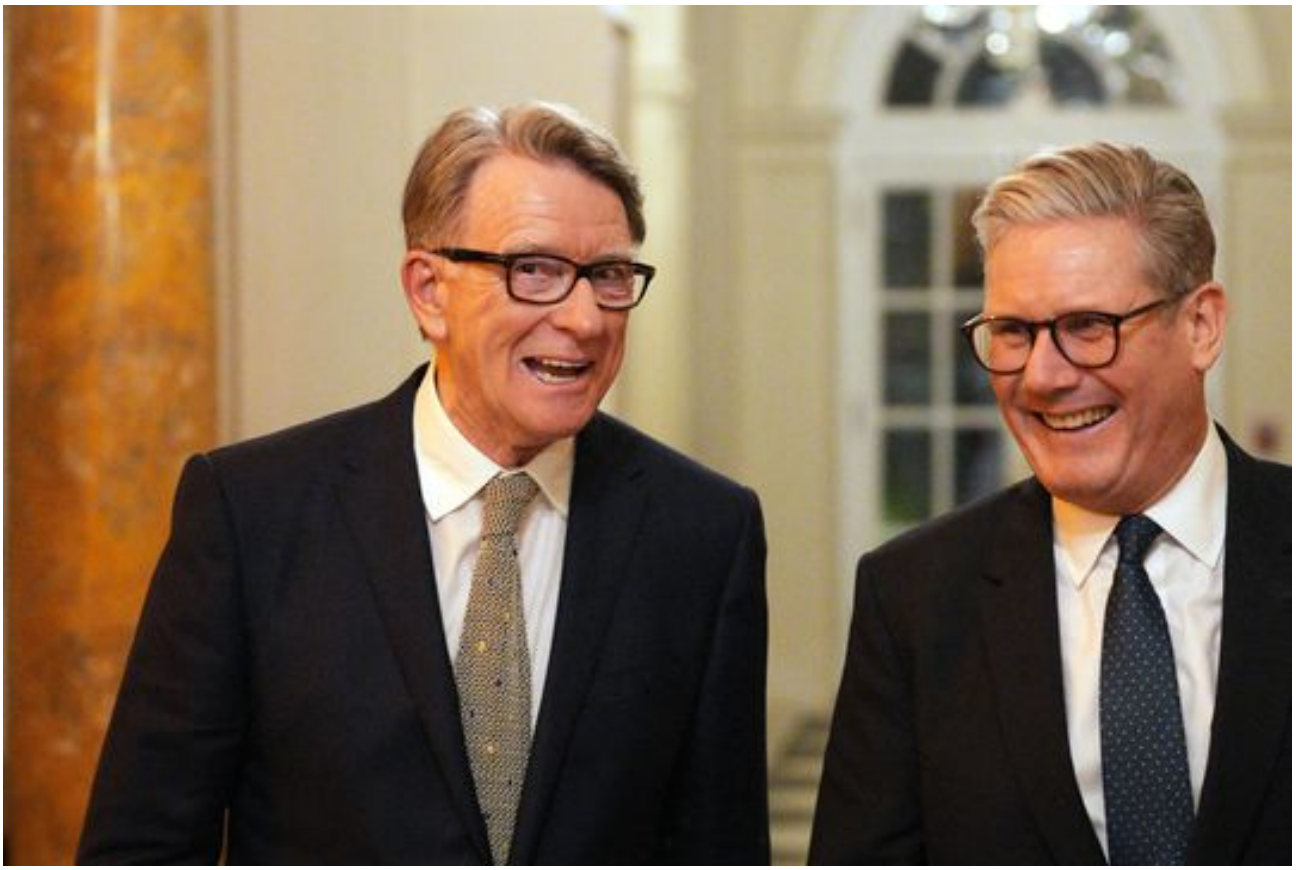
EXCLUSIVE: Messages included in the latest tranche of Mandelson documents show the disgraced former ambassador used a trackable tool while lobbying ministers for Labour's Oxford Chancellor bid

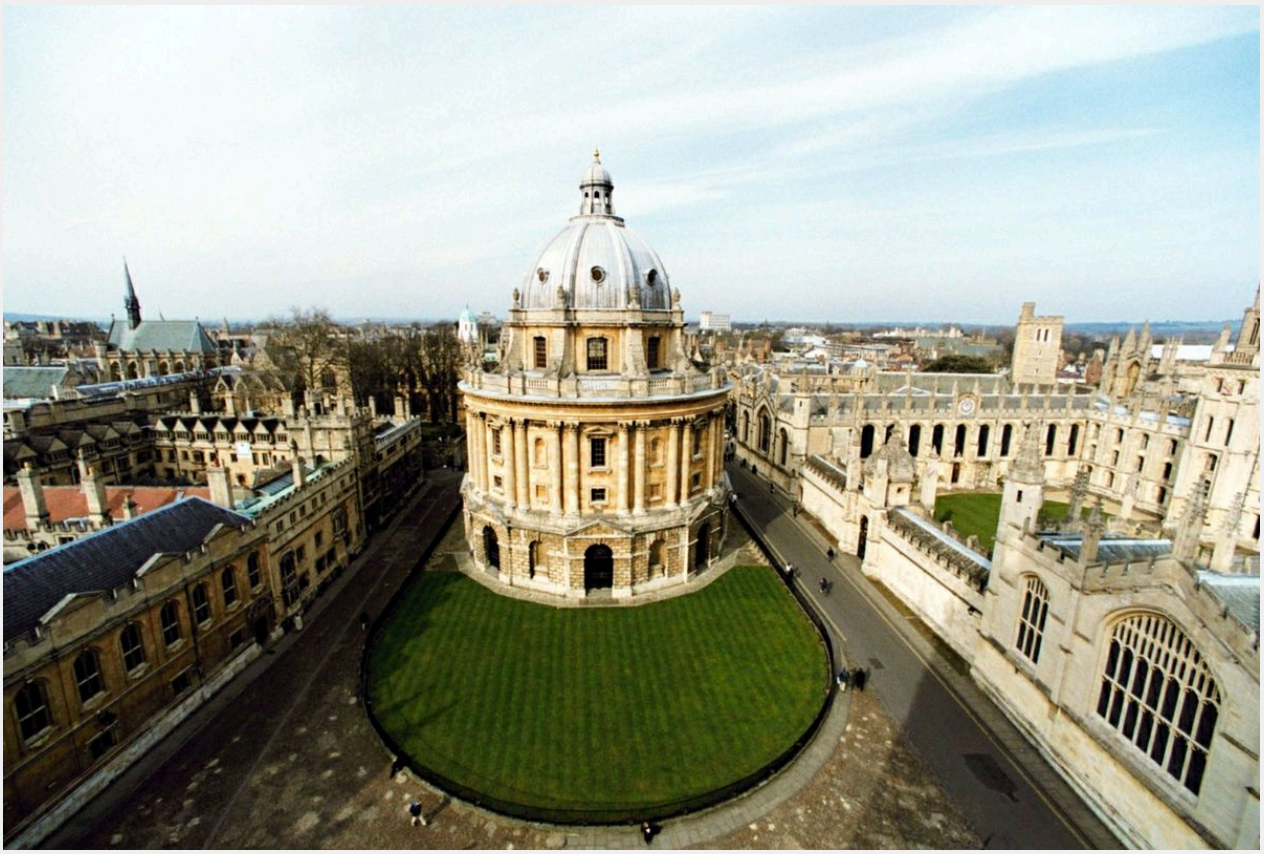
Documents reveal that Mandelson sent emails to key figures with trackable links*(Image: AP)*

Peter Mandelson sent serving Cabinet ministers links generated through a tracking service while running a behind-the-scenes Labour campaign, the new tranche of humble address documents reveal.

The disgraced former ambassador to the US was working to secure a Labour victory in the Oxford University Chancellor election, newly released government documents reveal, when he sent out links created using Grabify. The online service creates trackable URLs that can record information such as a user's IP address and other technical data before redirecting them to the intended destination.

The same tracking link was sent to some of the most senior figures in government, including Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood, pensions minister Torsten Bell, Labour Party chair Ellie Reeves and Foreign Office minister Stephen Doughty.





Mandelson was carrying out a get-out-the-vote campaign for Oxford University's Chancellor position*(Image: PA)*

The messages form hundreds of pages of WhatsApp exchanges, emails and official correspondence released following a House of Commons Humble Address relating to Mandelson's appointment and subsequent departure as Britain's ambassador to Washington. The documents show Mandelson orchestrating a get-out-the-vote operation throughout the summer and autumn of 2024.

He was at the time still chairman of lobbying and advisory firm Global Counsel, and months away from his ambassadorial appointment. He urged ministers to register to vote, recruit other Oxford graduates and circulate campaign messages through alumni networks.

In one message, recipients were asked to forward the registration link to "at least five graduates you know who would back a progressive candidate" and to share it with any alumni groups they belonged to. The campaign was framed in explicitly political terms. "The Chancellor has almost always been a Conservative party politician," Mandelson wrote.

William Hague was ultimately voted Oxford Chancellor*(Image: PA)*

"Now that voting is online we have our first real shot for a Labour figure to win." Later messages warned supporters about "William Hague's extensive campaign organisation backed by CCHQ".

But the most striking detail is what happened to the registration link itself. On August 3, 2024, Mandelson sent Torsten Bell the genuine Oxford University registration page hosted on the university's JISC survey platform. Two weeks later, in a follow-up message thanking supporters for registering, the official university link had disappeared.

In its place was a Grabify link containing the identifier "OPKKPP" - directing users to the same Oxford registration form, but via a trackable third-party URL first.

Stephen Doughty was among the people sent Grabify messages by Mandelson*(Image: AP)*

The same pattern appears in the messages to Shabana Mahmood and Stephen Doughty, who was sent the official university link on August 3 before receiving the Grabify version days later. The messages reveal Mandelson had the official registration link, used it, and then later replaced it with a trackable alternative pointing at the same destination.

The Grabify links were presented with the title "Register your interest to vote in the Election of the Chancellor", closely resembling the official Oxford registration process.

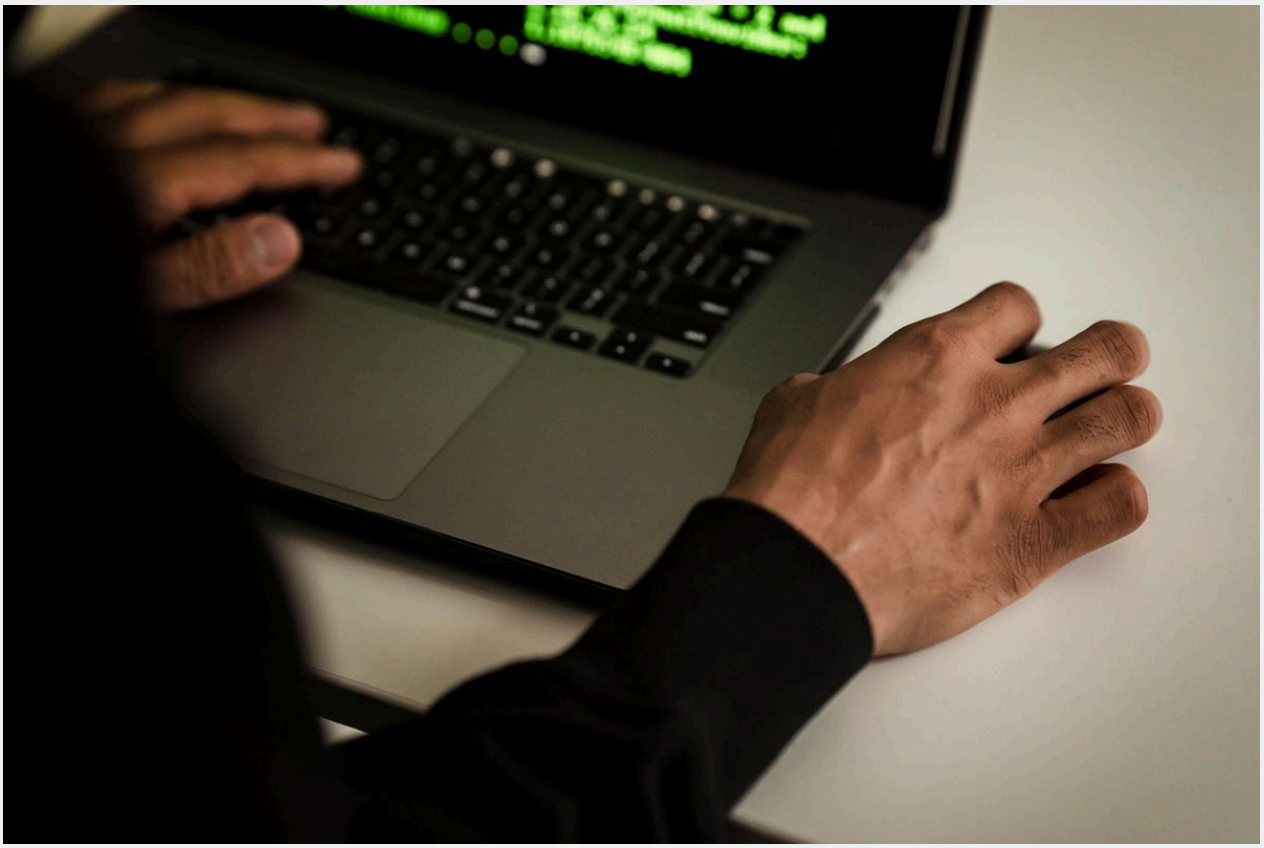
Recipients clicking the link would ultimately arrive at the university's registration page. Grabify is not a voting or registration platform. Its purpose is to create trackable links that sit in front of another web page. Depending on how it is configured, the service can record information like IP addresses, approximate location, internet service provider details, browser information and device characteristics.

Grabify links can be used to take certain types of information from recipients*(Image: Jam Press)*

Speaking to The Mirror, Kevin Walker, the founder of Black Swan Cyber Security Solutions, a cybersecurity firm that covers Chesterfield, Derbyshire and South Yorkshire, said that while Grabify isn't "inherently malicious" its tools can make tracking available to "almost anyone with little technical knowledge.

He said: "The tool itself is not inherently malicious. Similar technologies are used across the internet for analytics, troubleshooting and marketing purposes.

"The difference is that Grabify makes this type of tracking accessible to almost anyone with little technical knowledge. The concern from a cyber security perspective is that these links can be disguised as something completely different. A recipient may believe they are opening a news article, document or website when they are actually revealing information about their connection and device."



Grabify links can be used to 'build a picture of a potential target', an expert said*(Image: Jam Press)*

"An IP address alone is not usually enough to compromise a device, but it can provide useful intelligence that supports phishing, social engineering or online harassment. Combined with other publicly available information, it can help build a picture of a potential target.

"The wider lesson is the same one cyber security professionals have been sharing for years: be cautious when clicking unexpected links, particularly shortened or disguised URLs, and verify them if you are unsure." Mr Walker added that the situation highlights the importance of trust when notable figures and organisations ask people to click a link online.

He added: "What this situation does highlight though is the importance of trust, transparency and clear communication whenever organisations, politicians or businesses ask people to click a link online."

The messages shine a light on the methods used in Mandelson's campaign*(Image: Carl Court/PA Wire)*

"People should not have to wonder whether clicking a link from a public figure is simply taking them to information or quietly collecting data about them." The documents show the links were circulated to ministers and wider Labour networks. They do not reveal what information, if any, was subsequently collected, retained or used, nor whether any additional tracking features were enabled.

However, the disclosures raise questions about why a trackable third-party link was substituted for Oxford University's official registration page, particularly when the original university link had already been circulated.

They also shine a light on the methods used in Mandelson's campaign, which relied on serving ministers and Labour networks to mobilise support in what he described as Labour's "first real shot" at winning the Oxford Chancellor election. The documents were published as part of the Government's return to a House of Commons Humble Address relating to Lord Mandelson's appointment and removal as Ambassador to Washington.

The Mirror approached Peter Mandelson for comment.