# Former inmate calls for Wandsworth Prison demolition to fund modern facilities



A recent documentary titled *Wandsworth Prison: Out Of Control*, produced by Channel 5, has sparked substantial discourse regarding the state of the prison system in the UK, particularly focusing on Wandsworth Prison in south London. The film, directed by Chris Atkins—a former inmate who served five years for tax fraud—offers a critique of the Victorian-era facility and proposes an unconventional solution: demolish such outdated prisons and replace them with luxury housing, generating significant revenue for the construction of modern, purpose-built facilities.

Atkins has long been vocal about the deficiencies of the prison system, contributing pieces to the *Daily Mail* where he articulates his keen observations from his time behind bars. In the documentary, he recounts his personal experiences during his nine-month incarceration at Wandsworth, a Category B prison notorious for being chronically understaffed. He revealed that due to the lack of personnel, he was entrusted with supervising head counts of inmates—an ironic twist, given his prior conviction.

The film features insights not only from Atkins but also from other former inmates such as Dillon Greenway and Randel Rose. They candidly discussed tactics to manipulate their environment and even instigate riots to secure transfers to different facilities. According to Greenway, one effective method involves climbing onto safety netting and provoking officers, setting off a chain reaction that culminates in chaos. His description outlined a theatrical approach, emphasising the extremes prisoners might go to for a change in their circumstances.

However, the documentary doesn't shy away from exposing the grim realities within the prison walls. Disturbing footage captured by inmates highlighted severe hygiene issues, including a notable rat infestation. One inmate reported trapping six rats in a single night, underscoring the degrading conditions.

The narrative took a darker turn when a former officer, identified only as ‘Julia’, shared her harrowing experience. She recounted being handcuffed to a dying inmate for hours following the decision to remove him from life support. Despite her distress, she was immediately expected to return to her duties due to understaffing, with only five officers available that night. "All I wanted was to go outside and have a cigarette," she said, illustrating the severe strain placed on staff amid dire conditions.

The overarching theme of the documentary is a call to reevaluate the current state of prisons, highlighting both the physical deterioration and systemic shortcomings that plague institutions such as Wandsworth. Atkins’ proposal to repurpose such significant real estate into luxury flats raises questions about urban development and the future of penal reform in the UK. As discussions continue to grow, the documentary serves as a stark reminder of the complexities inherent in addressing long-standing issues within the correctional system.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/oct/01/time-after-time-repeat-offenders-inside-stories-by-chris-atkins-review> - This review of Atkins's book 'Time After Time' explores the reasons for reoffending, drawing from his experiences and interviews with former inmates, shedding light on systemic issues within the prison system.
4. <https://www.channel4.com/news/wandsworth-prison-issued-urgent-improvement-notice-after-serious-security-failings-found> - This report details the urgent improvement notice issued to HMP Wandsworth after inspectors found serious security failings, squalid conditions, and prisoners in despair, corroborating the documentary's critique of the prison's state.
5. <https://www.the-independent.com/independentpremium/long-reads/wandsworth-prison-chris-atkins-book-b1778167.html> - This article provides an in-depth look into Atkins's book, discussing the bureaucratic challenges and the harsh realities of prison life at Wandsworth, aligning with the documentary's portrayal of the facility.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/non-fiction/think-couldsurvive-britishprison-good-luck/> - This piece offers a critical perspective on surviving British prisons, highlighting issues like overcrowding and understaffing, which are central themes in Atkins's documentary and book.
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