

Alan Turing's family break silence after he's taken off £50 banknote



EXCLUSIVE

Luke Alsford

Published March 22, 2026 1:14pm

Updated March 22, 2026 6:17pm

Comments



Alan Turing is being taken off the £50 note despite only entering circulation in 2021 (Picture: PA)

Alan Turing's family has spoken out about the row engulfing the decision to replace famous faces with wildlife on banknotes.

The mathematician's great nephew said there are bigger issues than debating whether 'beavers are more or less important than Churchill'.

The hero codebreaker – voted the greatest person of the 20th century by the British public in 2021 – is being dumped from the £50 note after just four years.

However, it is the plans to remove wartime leader Winston Churchill from the £5 note that has sparked backlash from political leaders.



Alan Turing was named the greatest person of the 20th century by the British public in 2021 (Picture: Channel Four)

James Turing, who founded The Turing Trust, told **Metro** it is 'a bit odd to see people getting agitated about who is or isn't featured on a bank note' when there is 'so much conflict in the world'.

He added: 'The reality is we need to teach young people far more of the detail and nuance of issues than simply suggesting beavers are more or less important than Churchill.'

The Bank of England announced earlier this month that wildlife will feature on the next series of banknotes following a public consultation.

The central bank has issued banknotes with historical figures for more than 50 years.

Winston Churchill is currently on the £5 note, author Jane Austen is on the £10, while painter JMW Turner features on the £20.

However the Bank said earlier this month that images of wildlife would be more difficult to counterfeit and allow Brits to celebrate nature.

A panel of experts will draw up a wildlife shortlist to put before the public.

The fifth-great niece of Jane Austen – who is on the £10 note – told Metro the decision 'peculiar' and a 'real shame' last week.



The current crop of famous faces are being replaced by wildlife (Picture: Vuk Valcic/ZUMA Press Wire/Shutterstock)

James Turing said his family had been 'honoured to see Alan featured on the £50 note'.

But the great nephew stressed that it was more important to focus on how his legacy could 'make a positive difference to the world'.

He explained that the Turing Trust does this by taking donations of IT equipment and using them to help some of the poorest people in the world.

Their work has supported hundreds of thousands of students gain digital skills.

Dubbed 'the father of computer science', Alan Turing was pivotal in cracking intercepted messages that allowed the Allies to defeat the Axis in the World War Two.

However, the hero math genius was arrested in 1952 for homosexuality and found guilty of 'gross indecency'.

His death in 1954 of cyanide poisoning was ruled a suicide. He was given a royal pardon almost 60 years later.



James Turing helps his great uncle's legacy by supplying IT equipment to schools

James Turing said: 'I believe that history has many, many lessons to teach us.'

'To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, we need to teach young people far more of the detail and nuance of issues than simply suggesting beavers are more or less important than Churchill.'

He also warned: 'Whilst featuring famous Britons on our banknotes is a lovely tradition, the reality is that it's a complex issue.'

'And of course, no iconic Briton has ever been completely infallible either.'

Churchill's legacy has been called into question over his views on race and Britain's colonial empire.

His granddaughter, Emma Soames, also disagreed with accusations that the Bank of England's move was wokenery.

She said her family knew his appearance on the currency was not going to last forever.

Get in touch with our news team by emailing us at webnews@metro.co.uk.

For more stories like this, check our news page.