

Press release: Over £2 million paid to charity rebuilt by Commission inquiry

Over £2.1 million has been recovered to a charitable trust after a Commission inquiry exposed and addressed misconduct and mismanagement in its administration.

The London based grant-making charity was established to further general charitable purposes. Despite lending £2 million the charity was not able to evidence adequate attempts to protect the charity's assets or recover the loan. The Commission opened a statutory inquiry in May 2015 by which point the total due to the charity had risen to £2,236,401 as a result of interest accrued.

The Commission first engaged with The Reb Moische Foundation in 2014 regarding a loan it made to a private commercial company, Gladstar Ltd, which was connected to one of the trustees. The inquiry found that poor decision-making regarding the loan had placed the charity's funds at serious risk. The charity took no external investment advice before entering into the loan, and as Gladstar Ltd was based in Gibraltar, recovery of the funds would be challenging.

The Commission's inquiry also identified concerns about unmanaged conflicts of interest. One of the charity's trustees was secretary of the company at the time the loan was made, and subsequently became a Director. As a result of the Commission's intervention, the surviving trustee agreed to transfer the proceeds of the sale of six properties owned by Gladstar Ltd to the charity which resulted in £2,137,368.50 being vested in the bank account of the Official Custodian for Charities (the OCC).

The surviving trustee resigned from the charity and agreed not to take on any other charity trusteeships. Two new trustees were appointed by the settlor, and have opened a new bank account and adopted policies for grant making, investment and conflicts of interest. The Commission has since directed the OCC to transfer the recovered funds to the charity which, including interest, totalled £2,137,736.39. This happened on 7 October 2017.

The inquiry closed on 27 February with the publication of this report, however the Commission will continue to monitor the new trustees' application of the new policies and charitable funds.

Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

Failings of governance and financial management unfortunately put this charity's assets on the line. The good news is that, following our intervention, over £2 million can now be put towards important charitable causes.

This inquiry demonstrates that if not properly managed, conflicts of interest can seriously hamper trustees from acting in the best interests of their charity.

The Commission's full report of its inquiry is available on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk).

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).

[News story: The Long View – a lifetime of work in optronics is recognised in annual award](#)

Richard Hollins Senior Fellow, Cyber & Information Systems Department at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), has been recognised for his outstanding contribution to optronics.

At a special award ceremony earlier this month, Dr Hollins was presented with the lifetime achievement award from OPTRO – the international symposium on optronics for defence and security – which recognises a significant contribution in the field of optronics.

Optronics covers all the technologies that use light for information and processing – it includes lasers, detectors, cameras, sensors, optical communications.

Richard brought new insights to the search for protection measures against lasers of any wavelength – a requirement which becomes ever more important as the variety of available laser wavelengths continues to increase. Some of his work has contributed to the revision of international laser safety standards, which control the use of lasers in laboratories around the world.

It was the senior fellow's work in this and other areas which have contributed to innovation in optronics over several decades. Optronics provides what the eye can't see; imagery at a longer range than the eye can master, thermal images, infrared, radar, even camera images from low level light like star light – all vital for gathering information about an area or accurately identifying a target.

Richard said:

I'm very pleased to have the recognition of my career – I certainly didn't expect to get it – I expect I'll be retiring soon and I don't know how many more chances I'd have for an award like that. I've been fortunate to work with many colleagues at Dstl, in industry and academia, and in foreign government organisations, and I'm grateful for all their contributions to the work.

Things have changed a huge amount – in the days when I started, lasers were inefficient, we were trying to develop them into things that we could use, but they've needed to change considerably to the efficient compact devices we know today. I used to have to build 50,000 volt power supplies and today's devices use 10 volts or less. Lasers have found their way into many much smaller devices. Cameras themselves have also become much better and smaller – I have recollections of when you saw a TV camera or a thermal imager, it was a big thing with scanning optics that had to be wheeled around, and today all that complexity has been replaced by a small hand-held camera, and costs have come down.

The future of optronics continues to evolve – as a communications channel, optics is starting to offer secure directional communications with much higher bandwidth to open up new possibilities. It's always been difficult communicating with submarines as most electromagnetic wavelengths don't go through sea water – but lasers are now sufficiently good that progress is being made in this direction. Richard is still actively involved in physics at Dstl.

He said:

I don't get into the lab much these days but I still inspire people as a mentor and help to work out how we should address new challenges. I take a lot of interest from understanding new scientific challenges through simple calculations. I produce simple theoretical models that are written on a few pieces of paper, and which relate the inputs to the outputs via the underpinning physics – and to me that's a really powerful way of understanding. More complex computer-based models can be useful too, but everybody should try my simple approach first.

Dstl provides opportunities for a career with plenty of challenge: providing the science and technology required for our security and defence. We can't do all the work internally, but we select and work with the best partners. Our own work must be of the highest standard in order to understand the problem, to define the requirement and identify solutions, to manage the work as it proceeds, and to evaluate the products. My own career has enabled me to find ways to harness new developments in electro-optic technology to meet new military challenges. My award demonstrates

the respect with which Dstl science is viewed within the scientific community.

[News story: Identity requirements for property transactions](#)

In January we updated [Practice Guide 67](#), which explains who needs to confirm their identity for a property transaction and in which circumstances they need to do this.

The update focuses on how to complete the 'confirmation of identity panels' in our application forms and provides additional clarity where an attorney (someone legally appointed to act on someone else's behalf) is involved in a transaction.

The guide now clarifies that details for each party (for example the seller, buyer, and buyer's lender) must be listed in separate boxes in the identity sections of our application forms. See [section 5.1: Confirmation of identity](#) of the guide for full details.

This is important because it can help to reduce the risk of registration fraud and the need for additional enquiries. When customers list parties and attorneys separately, it helps to provide greater assurance that they are meeting our identity requirements; and getting applications right the first time can help to make conveyancing simpler, faster and cheaper for everyone.

When an attorney is dealing with a property we will usually need evidence of the attorney's identity too, unless an exception applies, as set out in [section 4.1. Exceptions](#) of the guide.

Attorneys are not disponors of property (for example, a seller), or disponees (for example a buyer) and therefore both the donor of a power (the person who has appointed the attorney) and their attorney are separate persons, for the purpose of our identity requirements. The attorney acts under powers given to them and must therefore be accounted for separately and listed in separate boxes in the identity sections of our application forms. If there is insufficient space to provide the information, customers can add additional boxes to the panel in the form or use [continuation form CS](#), to provide it.

In the past, we have received fraudulent powers with some applications, so we need evidence of the appointment and powers, to prove that the appointment is genuine.

In some cases, where both the donor and the attorney may be represented by the same conveyancer, they must be listed separately. The conveyancer acting

for the applicant must satisfy themselves, and therefore their client, that they are dealing with the right people.

Find full details in [Evidence of identity: conveyancers \(PG 67\)](#).

Notice: WV16 6TW, Oakridge Farm Limited: environmental permit application advertisement

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- how you can view the application documents
- when you need to comment by

The Environment Agency will decide:

- whether to grant or refuse the application
 - what conditions to include in the permit (if granted)
-

Press release: Government launches call for evidence for Civil Society Strategy

Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, has today launched a [public call for evidence](#) on a new strategy that will harnesses the power of communities, charities, and businesses to help build a fairer society.

[Tracey Crouch welcome views on Civil Society strategy](#)

The [engagement exercise](#) for the Civil Society Strategy will look at four themes that will strengthen civil society further, exploring the best way sectors can work together, empowering people to take action on the issues

that matter to them and improving the places they live and work in.

It is open for anyone to share their opinions, experiences and feedback over the next twelve weeks.

This work will build on the government's current work with young people and youth organisations, as well as efforts to grow social impact investing, tackle loneliness and build integrated communities.

Further to the online platform, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will also hold events around the country where people will be invited to talk about civil society.

Tracey Crouch Minister for Sport and Civil Society said:

The civil society sector is incredible and works hard to deliver so much for people and communities. I want to bring these individuals and organisations together even more to improve communities and help tackle the everyday challenges that people face. The strategy will be important in our mission to build a fairer society and help secure a better future for the next generation. I encourage everyone with an interest in this important area to come forward and make their voices heard.

The Civil Society Strategy will be developed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, together with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other government departments.

Jake Berry, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth, said:

This strategy reaffirms our commitment to working alongside all sections of society to build a fairer future for all. This piece of work will shape how we work with communities and will encompass their views in order to create a society that works for everyone.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

The online platform will be open for twelve weeks.

It is split into four sections: Our Civil Society, People, Partnerships and Places. You can choose to just answer the questions that are relevant to you:

1. Our civil society: is about the big questions of what civil society is, how it is working well and what needs to change to strengthen it further
2. People: explores how more people could take action on issues that matter to them
3. Partnership: explores the best ways to work across different sectors to

make a better society

4. Places: explores how we empower local people to improve the places they live and work