

[Speech: Gold standard: The Touchstone Award](#)

This article first appeared in the January 2018 edition of [TStoday](#).

In our current multichannel retail world, where consumers have direct access to global markets, it is essential that hallmarking continues to be enforced. Jewellery represents a particular opportunity for deceit because the person buying the article has no way of knowing whether their 18ct bangle is gold to the core, the fashionstatus trademark on their bracelet is genuine, or their prized cufflinks are merely plated with a thin layer of gold that will soon wear away, to expose base metal below.

High precious-metal prices, the popularity of more expensive brands, and the difficulty in identifying whether an item is what it purports to be, are all driving criminal activity. This can range from a slightly maverick workshop using under-carat components for repairs, to serious organised crime, funded by the mass sale of counterfeited products such as Tiffany, Pandora and Links of London.

Spotting non-compliance

The situation is exacerbated by the lack of consumer understanding of hallmarking legislation. A survey conducted in April 2017, with a Department for Business, Energy and Industry Strategy consumer panel, found “spontaneous awareness of hallmarks was initially extremely low”. When prompted, many people claimed to understand it, but the survey showed their knowledge to be poor and largely inaccurate. So, the consumer is relying on the jeweller to be trustworthy. As a result, enforcement of the legislation depends upon continual trade vigilance and trading standards enforcement.

High street non-compliance is relatively easy to spot. Many Touchstone applications chronicle proactive campaigns that have started by checking that dealers: are displaying notices explaining hallmarks; have correctly calibrated weighing scales; and stock hallmarked items in store. Pursuing non-compliance with these basic requirements regularly reveals significant long-term offences, leading to prosecutions for trademark infringements, among others.

Online sales are far more difficult to monitor. There is undoubtedly a significant lack of compliance online, with goods without a hallmark or incorrectly described being offered by businesses and private individuals on their websites, as well as on specialised jewellery marketplaces and resale platforms, such as eBay. Policing and enforcing compliance within the increasingly significant global, online market is a universal problem across all sectors. Within this market, there is little control over quality, or the reassurance and legal verification of a hallmark.

Consumer detriment

With local resources overstretched, there is a worry that trading standards officers will focus on more obviously life-threatening or sinister sectors, such as counterfeit drugs, loan sharks or faulty electrical goods. However, every hallmarking investigation reveals evidence that the centuries' old law is not being observed and, frequently, there are other illegal activities related to such infringements. These could be apparently minor, such as illegal weighing scales, but the level of cheating that can be achieved by this practice is significant.

At the other extreme, trading in counterfeit luxury jewellery items could be part of serious organised crime. There is always significant detriment to the consumer and, in many cases, it is the most vulnerable in our society who are being cheated.

Last year's Touchstone applications, from across the UK, reflected complaint intervention, proactive enforcement projects and information operations. There was also evidence of positive longterm activity in hallmarking operations from all applicants. This is encouraging news, but much more is required if effective enforcement is to be exercised over the ever-expanding online offer of jewellery from around the world now accessible in the UK.

Celebrating success

The winning Touchstone application for 2017 came from the London Borough of Ealing. Its success was down to a well-planned and executed series of inspections, after information that jewellery without a hallmark was on sale in the area.

A range of activities in various high-street premises was headed up by team leader Peter Clark, assisted by enforcement officers Mohammed Tariq and Brian Gohery. Their investigations revealed major noncompliance with the [Hallmarking Act 1973](#) by the jewellers inspected.

A carefully staged approach started with visits to advise all jewellers of their legal requirements. Subsequent visits led to jewellery without a hallmark being seized from several of the 24 premises visited. Inspection by the London Assay Office revealed that 82% of seized items were not hallmarked, and 22% were fraudulently described as 22ct, when they could only have been hallmarked as 18ct or – in one case – 9ct because of under-carated solder. Successful prosecutions followed, with non-compliant traders receiving more than £11,000 in fines. A hallmarking project is now embedded within the Ealing TS annual service plan and priorities.

As ever, the [winning team](#) was well rewarded for its efforts. The Touchstone Award was announced at the 2017 CTSI Conference dinner in Harrogate, and presented to Ealing by chair of the British Hallmarking Council Noel Hunter.

To engage the rest of the council and raise the profile of trading standards within the authority, the award was presented again at an event in Ealing in

November. Finally, the team enjoyed its prestigious training day and excellent lunch with the London Assay Office team at Goldsmiths' Hall.

The 2017 Touchstone applications demonstrated the importance of hallmarking enforcement. It is vital that our trading standards authorities continue to deliver this.

We look forward to receiving your applications for the 2018 Touchstone Award and recognising the hard work of trading standards teams in this area.

Author

Marion Wilson is a member of the British Hallmarking Council's education and enforcement committee.

[Press release: FCO statement on forthcoming Legislative Council by-election in Hong Kong](#)

We are concerned by the rejection of Agnes Chow's nomination for the forthcoming Legislative Council by-election. The right to stand for election is a fundamental right enshrined in Article 26 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights.

Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, and its rights and freedoms, are central to its way of life, and it is important that they should be fully respected.

[News story: New members announced for Ofsted board](#)

Dame Kathryn August and Pamela Scriven QC have been appointed to serve on the Ofsted Board for 3 years. John Hughes has been re-appointed to serve for an additional 3 years. Linda Farrant and Paul Snell's terms on the Ofsted board have ended today.

Julius Weinberg, chair of the Ofsted board said:

I have encountered great pride and professionalism every day since

I joined Ofsted. It is made up of people who want to make a positive difference to children's lives and help give them a better future.

So I am delighted to welcome Kathryn and Pamela to the Ofsted board, and I am sure their individual expertise and experience will be hugely valuable to the organisation. I am also pleased that John is staying on.

I would like to wish Linda and Paul all the best after they leave. I'm grateful for the huge contributions they have all made to the Ofsted board.

Below is some further information on the board members:

Dame Kathryn August

An education consultant, former head teacher, Ofsted Inspector and National Leader of Education, Dame Kathryn August will bring extensive experience of secondary education and a clear understanding of academies and multi-academy trusts to the board.

Pamela Scriven QC

A QC with extensive experience as a lawyer, Pamela Scriven has significant social care and safeguarding expertise and has had a number of board level roles in her professional life.

John Hughes

A former BP executive with a background in risk management and strategy, John Hughes also previously worked as an FE College lecturer, a teacher and head of physics at a secondary school in London.

Ofsted's board is chaired by Professor Julius Weinberg and also includes John Cridland CBE, James Kempton and Venessa Willms OBE alongside HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman.

Further information

The appointments were conducted and agreed in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) and were made on merit; political activity played no part in the decision-making process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations and the code of practice, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if any declared) and other information, to be made public.

The details of the application process and job description were published online and the essential criteria were:

- The ability to think strategically and to contribute to strategic

development in different contexts;

- High level management and/or board experience in the public, voluntary or private sectors;
- The ability to build effective relationships at high levels and/or between organisations;
- A commitment to Ofsted as an inspectorate and regulator, and its role in improving standards in education, children's services and skills; and
- Significant expertise and/or experience working at a senior level in children's social care, including child protection, further education, and/or financial management.

The desirable criteria were:

- Experience or expertise in the maintained secondary school sector; and
- Experience or expertise in information technology and knowledge management.

The roles are remunerated at £8,282 per annum, based on 20 days' work.

Press release: Milestone for £242 million Trans-Pennine road improvements

The A57 improvement on the Greater Manchester side – featuring new dual and single carriageways between the M67 and Woolley Bridge – is the centrepiece of the Trans-Pennine Upgrade programme and requires special planning permission. There are also other important improvements along the route with safety and technology improvements either side of Woodhead Pass – and a major overhaul of Westwood roundabout in South Yorkshire where the A616 meets the A61.

Highways England unveiled the timetable for the statutory consultation on Monday 29 January. It will run between Monday 12 February 2018 and Sunday 25 March 2018 with a programme of public consultation events and a variety of other ways for people to get involved – including by email, post and online.

Highways England's Trans-Pennine Upgrade project manager Monica Corso Griffiths said:

Having announced our preferred options for this important investment last November this is now the opportunity for everyone concerned to help us shape the detail of the individual schemes before we submit firm and final proposals to the planning authorities.

We'd urge anyone with an interest in the improvements to let us know their views. This is an important investment in one of the most important east to west routes in the country. The improvements form part of the current £15 billion government investment in motorways and major A roads and are a vital element of Highways England's support for the Northern Powerhouse – unlocking the potential for new homes and jobs by tackling congestion.

The proposals included in the public consultation are:

- Mottram Moor link road – a new dual carriageway from the M67 junction 4 roundabout to a new junction on the A57 at Mottram Moor and a new single carriageway connecting to the A6018 Roe Cross Road
- a new single carriageway link from the A57 at Mottram Moor to a new junction on the A57 at Woolley Bridge
- safety and technology improvements – including safety measures focused on addressing accident hotspots and the provision of electronic message signs
- A616/A61 Westwood roundabout – improvements to reduce congestion and improve the flow of traffic through the roundabout in Tankersley, Sheffield

Highways England will need to secure a development consent order (DCO) to enable it to build the new stretches of road at Mottram. To help Highways England prepare its DCO to the planning authorities, statutory consultation events are being staged across both sides of the Pennines during the consultation period. As well as the public exhibitions, paper response forms and consultation brochures will be available at locations open to the public from 12 February and can be handed in at these events or sent to the freepost address provided on the form.

Further information about the venues for the events, scheme proposals and details of the deposit locations, which include some local post offices and libraries, can be found on the [scheme website](#).

Anyone who wants more information or to give their views on the scheme can also email the project team at: Trans_Pennine_Scheme@highwaysengland.co.uk or call 0300 123 5000, the Highways England's customer care centre.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Selling steroids and sex meds sees Gloucestershire man sentenced](#)



Medicines &
Healthcare products
Regulatory Agency

Mr Grant Polson, aged 30 of Cheltenham, was sentenced at Gloucester Crown Court today following a guilty plea on seven counts of the unlawful importation and distribution of medicinal products.

MHRA investigators seized more than 80,000 doses of steroids, and unlicensed and counterfeit erectile dysfunction medicines as well as illegal slimming tablets. They are estimated to be worth more than £38,800.

Importing the medicines from India and Turkey, Polson was selling them illegally online through social media like Twitter and Facebook, investigators discovered. He had customers across the UK, as well as Europe and North America.

Polson received an 8-month sentence, suspended for 18 months. In sentencing the judge noted he was only spared prison because of his early guilty plea. Polson was also ordered to pay £10,000 towards investigation costs.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement said:

Make no mistake, we are committed to identifying and prosecuting criminals who put peoples' lives at risk by selling medicines illegally.

Medicines purchased outside the regulated supply chain can be dangerous, and there is no assurance of quality and standards. There can be devastating consequences to your health.

Criminals have no interest in your health and wellbeing; they are only concerned about making money at your expense.

We are cracking down on perpetrators to make sure this type of

crime does not pay.

MHRA is currently running the [#FakeMeds](#) campaign to warn people against buying potentially dangerous or useless unlicensed medicines sold by illegal online suppliers.

Visit www.gov.uk/fakemedes for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites.

Published 31 January 2018

Last updated 31 January 2018 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 31 January 2018 Amended to clarify sentence.
2. 31 January 2018 First published.