

Press release: Oxford mobile phone dealer handed 12 year disqualification

William Robert Howard (45) director of the now liquidated Expeditors Limited has entered into an undertaking that prevents him from acting as a director for 12 years.

The mobile phone business was incorporated in 2004 and a petition was made to wind up Expeditors Limited in June 2017 by HM Revenue & Customs regarding an unpaid VAT bill of £22,545.40.

The Insolvency Service then conducted an investigation, which focused on the mobile phone company's participation in a form of VAT fraud known as Missing Trader Intra Community fraud (MITC).

Commonly known as 'carousel' fraud, MITC fraud sees large consignments of high-value electrical or small items invoiced rapidly and repeatedly around trading chains. On paper the goods look like they are being moved repeatedly from customer to customer but the goods are only moved as they enter or exit the UK.

In the case of Expeditors Limited, William Howard used the scheme to offset VAT and reclaim close to £350,000 in its 2005 to 2006 VAT return.

Examples of MITC conducted by William Howard were indicated by the rapid succession of same-day trades within the UK but goods weren't delivered and remained on a shared freight forwarder, there were common uses of the same offshore bank, as well as payments being arranged with third parties who were neither suppliers nor customers.

Additionally, all the traders banked with the First Curacao International Bank which was shut down by the Netherlands Antilles authorities in September 2006 in order to prevent money laundering.

William Howard's disqualification started on 5 February 2018 and means that he cannot promote, manage, or be a director of a limited company until 2030.

Anthony Hannon, Official Receiver in the Public Interest Unit of the Insolvency Service, said:

This type of VAT fraud is very serious and a high priority for HMRC and the Insolvency Service.

MITC fraud has caused loss to the public purse and has cost the tax payer substantial sums in fraudulent VAT claims. The Insolvency Service is committed to making directors accountable for their actions.

Expeditors Limited (CRO No. 05266310) was incorporated on 21 October 2004. It traded from premises in Oxford.

The petition to wind up the company was presented by HM Revenue & Customs in respect of unpaid VAT of £22,545.40. The winding up order against Expeditors Limited was made on 26 June 2017.

Mr Howard was born in November 1972.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: