

Charity Commission launches inquiry into religious charity over serious regulatory concerns

Press release

Statutory inquiry opened into The Saint George Educational Trust (1043158) due to concerns including about potential political activity.



The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into The Saint George Educational Trust over serious regulatory concerns that there is or has been misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

In particular, concerns have been identified in relation to activities carried out by the charity that do not appear to further its religious purposes, including material it had posted online and political activity or campaigning. The Commission also has significant concerns that the charity has associations with an extreme right-wing organisation and how this furthers its religious purposes, something that the Commission has previously investigated.

The charity, based in Andover, Hampshire, has charitable purposes that include the advancement of the Catholic religion.

The inquiry will examine:

- the administration, governance, and management of the charity by the trustees – including, but not limited to, its relationships with external organisations and individuals, and use of the internet and social media
- the financial controls and management of the charity, and whether its funds have been properly expended in accordance with the charity's purposes and can be accounted for
- the conduct of the trustees
- whether or not the trustees have complied with and fulfilled their duties and responsibilities as trustees under charity law

The Commission may extend the scope of the inquiry if additional regulatory issues emerge.

Immediately following the opening of the inquiry, the Commission took action to freeze a bank account holding the charity's funds so that no one can access or move them without the Commission's prior consent.

The Commission has also ordered the trustees to review and remove content from the charity's website and social media pages that does not further the charity's purposes, and directed them not to allow such material in future. At this time the charity's website is no longer available to view.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The charity has been the subject of three previous statutory inquiries, two of which opened in 1997 and 1999. The second inquiry was opened to consider the charity's association with an extreme right-wing organisation. On 25 July 2022, the charity became part of the Commission's Statutory Class Inquiry, having failed to submit financial information to the Commission for two or more years over the last 5 years. The charity ceased to be part of the Class Inquiry with the opening of this new inquiry, however its accounting information (for the financial years ending 31 March 2020 and 2021) remains outstanding, which will be considered as part of the new inquiry.
3. This latest inquiry was opened on 7 October 2022, under section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').
4. Section 76(3)(d) of the Act gives the Commission power to order any person who holds any property on behalf of a charity not to part with that property without the approval of the Commission.
5. Section 84 of the Act gives the Commission power to compel trustees to take specified action(s) which the Commission considers to be expedient in the interests of the charity.
6. Section 84A of the Act gives the Commission power to direct trustees not to take or continue to take a specific action(s) if the Commission considers the action(s) would constitute misconduct or mismanagement in the charity's administration.

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Free legal advice piloted to help people facing financial difficulties

- Free early legal advice for thousands facing debt, housing and welfare benefit difficulties
- Legal advice to help stop people falling into further debt and having to appear in court
- Five-month pilot test phase launched in Manchester and Middlesbrough

The pilot in Middlesbrough and Manchester expands the scope of legal aid funding to more people who previously would not have been eligible for free legal advice, to help them address issues before they become more complex or costly.

The aim is to ensure people have a better chance of swiftly resolving legal problems, stopping them from spiralling into further difficulties.

Currently, many people do not access legal advice until too late, causing further problems, such as having to appear in court, increased debt, and even homelessness. The pilot will explore if these issues can be avoided by providing legal advice earlier.

The pilot advice will be offered to individuals struggling with housing issues, paying bills or experiencing problems with their benefits, with no means or merits tests required. To understand what difference the pilot service makes, participants of the pilot will either receive up to three hours of free legal advice and support or be signposted to existing advice services.

Justice Minister Lord Bellamy KC said:

Early legal advice can be invaluable for people that find themselves in difficult and stressful situations, helping struggling individuals avoid falling further into debt or ending up in court.

Through this pilot we are paving the way for more people to receive free legal advice, at an earlier point in time so that their problems can be addressed before they worsen.

A legal adviser can explain issues like council tax arrears, and provide further information about housing rights and how to apply for Universal Credit, if required.

Invitations to the scheme will be sent out to people who have fallen behind on council tax payments by Manchester City Council and Middlesbrough Council. Invitees will then be asked to complete a confidential survey to determine whether they have a legal issue that requires support.

After the 5-month initial testing phase, the Ministry of Justice will review evidence collected through the evaluation and use this to inform the design of a future larger-scale pilot.

New £155m facilities management contract comes into service in Gibraltar

The £155 million contract, which provides maintenance work, repairs, servicing, and hard facilities management to the MOD's estate in Gibraltar, was awarded to Mitie in May by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). It will cover every part of the MOD estate in Gibraltar, from the harbour and the runway to offices and accommodation.

It is the first contract to come into service under DIO's new Overseas Prime Contracts (OPC) programme, which will also see further contracts come into force at Defence sites including Cyprus, Germany, the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island. The contract is for an initial period of seven years and aims to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of service personnel and staff in Gibraltar, allowing them to focus on their work in the knowledge that they have safe and resilient infrastructure to work from.

The new contracts have been developed taking into account recommendations for improvements to the current arrangements and will mean a better service for hundreds of military personnel based overseas. They seek to provide better value for money and quicker repairs, reducing bureaucracy and unnecessary processes to keep the estate operational.

Greater alignment to current industry standards will mean increased collaboration between DIO and its suppliers and allow for services to be better tailored to the requirements of specific sites. A new, integrated

software system will enable information to be shared more effectively.

The contracts have been designed to promote more efficient processes and the quicker delivery of high volume, lower value works, ensuring increased value for money. Performance targets will encourage a high standard of repairs and reduce the need for repeat visits.

The contract is expected to directly sustain around 200 jobs in Gibraltar.

DIO's Chief Operating Officer David Brewer said:

DIO is committed to supporting people across the Armed Forces who depend on us to provide facilities and essential services which allow them to work safely and securely.

This important milestone follows years of hard work to design a contract that builds on the successes of existing hard facilities management arrangements while adding additional services and improvements to improve the quality of life for our Armed Forces in Gibraltar.

Commodore Tom Guy, Commander British Forces Gibraltar, said:

I look forward to the new contract coming into effect, and the benefits it will bring to our people, both uniformed and civilian, here in Gibraltar. I am particularly pleased to hear of the promised improvements, which I hope will do two things: firstly help us to execute our mission effectively, while preparing Gibraltar better for the future, and secondly, to improve the daily lived experience for all our people.

Brian Talbot, Managing Director, Central Government & Defence, Mitie, said:

As proud supporters of the British Armed Forces, we are delighted to be running the new Overseas Prime Contract for Gibraltar. We are committed to working with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to improve services for our Armed Forces based in Gibraltar, delivered by our exceptional colleagues and building on the technology solutions we have implemented on our Future Defence Infrastructure Services contract in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The next OPC contract to be awarded will be for hard facilities management in Cyprus in early 2023, with the final contract to be the South Atlantic Islands in summer 2024.

[UK boosts Ukraine's cyber defences with £6 million support package](#)

Press release

The UK's Ukraine Cyber Programme is utilising world-leading expertise to protect Ukraine's critical national infrastructure and vital public services from cyber attacks.



- UK's Ukraine Cyber Programme is protecting the Ukrainian Government and its critical national infrastructure from malicious cyber attacks.
- Partnership with industry is preventing Russian malign actors from accessing vital networks and providing forensic capabilities to the Ukrainian authorities.
- An initial £6.35 million package was mobilised in response to an increasing tempo of Russian cyber activity in the days following the invasion of Ukraine.

A £6.35 million support package from the UK Government is protecting Ukraine's critical national infrastructure and vital public services from cyber attacks, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly has revealed.

The UK's Ukraine Cyber Programme was mobilised shortly after Putin's invasion in February to protect against increased Russian cyber attacks. The programme has not been made public until now to protect its operational security.

Utilising the expertise of world-leading cyber security providers, the UK's Ukraine Cyber Programme has to date:

1. Provided incident response support to Government of Ukraine entities, protecting them against destructive cyber attacks, including malware such as Industroyer2. This is preventing malicious actors from accessing vital information relevant to the war effort.
2. Limited attacker access to vital networks and supported Ukraine to harden their critical infrastructure against future attacks.
3. Delivered frontline cyber security hardware and software including: firewalls to prevent attacks taking hold; DDoS protection to ensure Ukrainian citizens can continue to access vital information; and forensic capabilities to enable Ukrainian analysts to fully understand system compromises.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

Russia's attack on Ukraine is not limited to its horrific land invasion. It has also persistently attempted to invade Ukraine's cyberspace, threatening critical information, services and infrastructure.

The UK's support to Ukraine is not limited to military aid – we are drawing on Britain's world-leading expertise to support Ukraine's cyber defences. Together, we will ensure that the Kremlin is defeated in every sphere: on land, in the air and in cyber space.

Lindy Cameron, CEO of the National Cyber Security Centre, said:

The NCSC is proud to have played a part in supporting Ukraine's cyber defenders. They have mounted an impressive defence against Russian aggression in cyberspace, just as they have done on the physical battlefield.

The threat remains real and the UK's support package is undoubtedly bolstering Ukraine's defences further.

Russian actors have a long history of hostile and destabilising activity against Ukraine, including:

- Shutting off part of Ukraine's electricity grid in December 2015, leaving 230,000 people without power for up to 6 hours.
- Destructive cyber attacks in 2017 targeting Ukraine's finance and energy sectors and government services, leading to knock-on effects on other European partners.
- Kyiv metro and Odessa airport disrupted by ransomware that encrypted

hard drives.

- Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks on 15-16 February 2022, which the UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) judge were the work of Russia's GRU military intelligence agency.
- A series of cyber attacks since the invasion, including against commercial operators such as Viasat in March which had a serious impact on access to internet and other services across both Ukraine and other parts of Europe.

The tempo of Russian cyber attacks against Ukraine increased significantly following its illegal invasion in February 2022, seeking to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and strategic advantage in the war.

The UK's support is strengthening Ukraine's cyber defences and improving collective long-term cyber resilience.

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[Wrightbus secures £26 million government-backed support in global pursuit of green transport](#)

Press release

UK Export Finance-backed funding will open up the world's first hydrogen-powered, zero carbon double deck bus, to new markets worldwide



- Wrightbus has already secured export contracts to Australia and Germany, with its sights set on expansion in Italy, France, Spain and Southeast Asia
- This growth will boost jobs in Northern Ireland as Wrightbus looks to hire 300 new staff in the next year, after already expanding headcount

by over 40% in the last 12 months

UK Export Finance (UKEF) is providing a Northern Ireland-based bus manufacturer with an 80 percent guarantee on its major financing deal from Barclays. The government guarantee is on an £18 million Green Trade Loan and £8 million Green Bank Guarantee, allowing Wrightbus to export its cutting-edge zero emission buses to new export markets.

Based in Ballymena, Wrightbus introduced the world's first hydrogen-powered double deck bus in 2020, and also produces electric-powered single and double-deck buses for export globally. The business is aiming to manufacture 3,000 zero-emissions buses by 2024, comprising 10 percent of the UK's total fleet.

The production of zero-emission vehicles is a capital-intensive process and Wrightbus needed to bridge the gap from the warehouse to road-ready. With orders of over 200 buses from customers, such as the National Transport Authority in the Republic of Ireland, UKEF and Barclays support has enabled Wrightbus to scale up production to meet this demand.

Wrightbus is expanding its exporting operations globally, with sights set on expanding into Italy, France, Spain and South-East Asia. The business hopes to grow exports to over 40% of turnover as demand increases globally. It will also look to make 300 further hires to support its growth ambitions, bolstering local jobs in the region.

Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch MP said:

It's fantastic to see Great British companies like Wrightbus take full advantage of the opportunities exporting opens up. By expanding into new markets, building on wins secured from our UK-Australia trade deal, and this new UKEF-backed support, they are driving growth and creating high-skilled green jobs in Northern Ireland.

I am proud the Government is supporting British firms to go further, exporting their cutting-edge clean technology to new markets, cutting emissions and boosting jobs across the United Kingdom.

Ben Werth, Wrightbus Chief Commercial Officer, said:

At Wrightbus, we are entering the next stage of our ambitious growth plan, significantly growing our export volume from our UK base and becoming one of the leading battery electric and hydrogen bus manufacturers in Europe. UKEF's support will strongly help us on our future global growth path.

Richard Lowe, Head of UK Large Corporate at Barclays Corporate Banking, added:

WrightBus continues to drive the net-zero agenda in the public transport sector and we are pleased to play a part in their significant ambitions to export this expertise. Barclays are committed to supporting businesses with a strong environmental focus and are pleased to provide financing solutions to deliver the rapid growth of this NI headquartered manufacturer.

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