

# Recovered appeal: Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, College Close, Wheatley, Oxford (ref: 3230827 – 23 April 2020)

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## UK statement in response to Ambassadors Cevik and Grau

Thank you Mr Chairperson. I would like to join the EU and others in thanking Ambassador Cevik and Ambassador Grau for briefing us virtually today and commend you both for finding ways to continue your vital work, whilst taking appropriate measures to help prevent the spread of infection. As this is the first time I am taking the floor today, I would also like to thank the Albanian chairmanship for facilitating this meeting and for the leadership they have provided in these difficult times.

We welcome the 16th April mutual release and exchange of detainees on the eve of Orthodox Easter. Unfortunately, however, we have little other cause for celebration and the current Covid-19 outbreak risks exacerbating civilian suffering even further.

Many Ukrainians remain unjustly detained in non-government controlled Donetsk and Luhansk regions, in illegally annexed Crimea and in the Russian Federation. Many are reportedly being held in conditions that render them vulnerable to infection. We call on Russia to release all illegally detained Ukrainian political prisoners. We also condemn Russia's latest moves to further undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and make life harder for people living in Crimea – including another round of conscription of residents of Crimea into the Russian military.

Whilst Easter brought a prisoner exchange, there was sadly no recommitment to the ceasefire. Indeed, Ambassador Cevik's report demonstrates that the

security situation has deteriorated since the start of the year, with the situation of the Donetsk Filtration Station and the Vasylivka pumping station remaining concerning. We join the call of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire during this outbreak, and we note that a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire in eastern Ukraine is all the more important to ensure that the water and electricity supply, which civilians need to prevent the spread of Covid-19, is not interrupted. Ambassador Grau, I would be very interested to hear what discussion there has been of the call for a global ceasefire in the Trilateral Contact Group.

Today is additionally sombre as we mark three years since the death of SMM paramedic Joseph Stone. It is a poignant reminder of the dangers that mines continue to pose to both civilians and the SMM. We would like to reiterate Ambassador Cevik's call for comprehensive demining, especially around hospitals and access routes, which may be required during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Ambassador Cevik, we would like to thank you in particular for continuing to take the decisions necessary to balance duty of care with implementing the Mission's mandate. Your Mission has always operated in challenging circumstances, and we note that the systematic restrictions in non-government controlled areas continue unabated. Now you are facing additional challenges, which are being compounded by the unacceptable restrictions imposed by the Russia-backed armed formations on your mission's ability to cross the Line of Contact and between non-government controlled Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Ambassador Cevik, we would be grateful if you could give us an update on the restrictions imposed on the Mission at the entry-exit checkpoint at Stanytsia Luhanska Bridge in particular.

Unfortunately vital humanitarian assistance provided by international organisations like the ICRC is also being affected by these same restrictions, which is crucial to helping civilians.

We therefore call on Russia to act responsibly and use their influence over the armed-formations they back to end these restrictions, to respect the ceasefire, to protect critical infrastructure and to make progress on humanitarian demining.

We reiterate our full support to the Minsk agreements and call on all sides to implement them in full. Our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters, is unwavering and we will continue to call on Russia to return to respect for the OSCE principles and commitments that enhance all our security.

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# Generous donors urged to give safely to registered charities this Ramadan

As Muslims enter the month of Ramadan, the Charity Commission is encouraging donors to take simple steps to ensure their donations reach the intended cause.

Ramadan is a time of huge generosity among British Muslims, with the Muslim Charities Forum estimating that, in previous years, UK donors have given over £130m to charity during the holy month alone\*.

Recently, Muslim communities around the country have been part of efforts to relieve those in need as a result of the coronavirus emergency, including providing meals to staff at local NHS hospitals and delivering food parcels to vulnerable people of all faiths in their communities.

Increased online giving is expected this Ramadan, with a reduction in cash collections, as mosques and community centres remain closed to reduce social contact.

Most fundraising is genuine, however fraudsters and criminals may sometimes take advantage of public generosity at times of increased giving, using various methods such as fake appeal websites, email appeals that falsely use the name of genuine charities, or appeals from fake charities.

The regulator is therefore pointing to simple steps people can take to make sure donations reach registered charities:

- Check the charity's name and registration number at [gov.uk/checkcharity](https://www.gov.uk/checkcharity). Most charities with an annual income of £5,000 or more must be registered.
- Make sure the charity is genuine before giving any financial information – it's ok to decide not to give on the spot. Be wary of unsolicited emails from charities you have never heard of and be careful when responding to emails or clicking on links within them.
- Exercise the same caution as with any other internet transaction, for example, to donate online, visit the charity's own website and always type the website address into the browser yourself.
- Contact or find out more online about the charity that you're seeking to donate to or work with to find out more about their spending. Ask a trusted friend or relative if you are unable to research this or need a second opinion.
- Ignore requests to donate through a money transfer company.
- If in doubt about an approach, give instead to a charity that you have an existing relationship with.

The Commission's [online register](#) also allows donors to search for charities operating within their own local authority area, or to undertake keyword searches to find charities providing specific services, such as foodbanks or

support for older people.

**Helen Stephenson, CEO of the Charity Commission, said:**

We know that Muslim teaching places great emphasis on supporting those in need; we've seen evidence of that charitable spirit over recent weeks as our society responds to the pandemic, and we can expect to see enormous generosity continue as Muslims pay their Zakat and other contributions during Ramadan, supporting causes close to home and around the world. By giving to a registered charity, donors can be assured that their funds will be accounted for in line with the charity law framework.

**Fadi Itani, CEO of the Muslim Charities Forum, said:**

Ramadan may feel very different this year, as we are unable to gather together as families and communities. However, one thing we expect to remain unchanged is the huge generosity Muslims display during the Holy Month. We encourage those who can afford to give to do so generously, but to use their head as well as their heart before parting with money. That includes checking that your donations are going to a registered charity, and thinking purposefully about what you want your donation to achieve.

**Ends.**

**Notes to editors**

1. \*Figures around donations are always estimates. For more information please contact the [Muslim Charities Forum](#).
2. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator and registrar of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the about us page on GOV.UK.
3. The National Emergencies Trust, which the Commission helped establish, has set up a [coronavirus appeal](#), which will see funds distributed to local communities around the UK affected by the pandemic.
4. The government has published [guidance on businesses and venues that should remain closed](#).

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**[Commission finds misconduct by charity](#)**

## that claimed to deliver public safety messages via Bluetooth

An inquiry by the Charity Commission into the charity Public Safety Charitable Trust (PSCT) has concluded that there was misconduct and/or mismanagement by the trustees.

The charity will be removed from the register of charities once the liquidator's final report and forms are submitted to Companies House to dissolve the company.

The charity was set up to broadcast public service messages to communities via Bluetooth equipment situated close to shopping centres in towns and cities across the country. It claimed to have broadcast to approximately 2 million people.

The charity took out leases on empty properties and placed equipment in them to broadcast information about crime in the area. Businesses received a reduction in their business rates for leasing properties to a charity, and in return paid a donation to PSCT.

When the inquiry opened, the charity held approximately 2,000 leases for properties in 240 local authorities.

The Commission first engaged with the charity in October 2011 after concerns regarding business rates relief claimed by the charity were raised by several local authorities that subsequently took the charity to court.

The matter eventually came to the Court of Appeal in May 2013, which found solely operating Bluetooth transmitters in premises was not sufficient for charitable purposes. As a result of this judgement, the charity became liable for approximately £17 million in business rates on the premises it leased.

The Commission opened a statutory inquiry at the time, but this was placed on hold after a compulsory liquidation petition was issued by the Insolvency Service and the charity began to be wound up on 8 July 2013.

The Commission's inquiry found the trustees contracted with Commercial Link Ltd ("CL") as the sole provider of the Bluetooth technology, equipment and services to the charity, and the company had control over the charity's records and administration – to the exclusion of the trustees.

The inquiry also found the trustees could not show they had acted in the charity's interests in leasing properties and subjecting the charity to the risks of financial loss for business rates. The trustees claimed to have taken adequate legal advice, although as part of the agreement with CL the charity retained responsibility for any liabilities and the trustees did not show any evidence as to how they mitigated for this risk.

The trustees have been disqualified. Mark Ferguson was disqualified for 9

years on 25 May 2017 and Christine Sutton was disqualified for 5 years, from 15 July 2015 from acting as company directors by the Insolvency Service, in accordance with the criteria set out in the Directors Disqualification Act 1986, and as a consequence, from being trustees or holding a senior position at a charity, for their conduct in this matter.

**Amy Spiller, head of the investigations team at the Charity Commission, said:**

Being a charity is meaningful – we expect trustees to be accountable and demonstrate their worth to the public and donors. The trustees of Public Safety Charitable Trust could not show this, instead they undermined the meaning of charity by enabling businesses to avoid paying business rates, resulting in the charity taking on huge liabilities they could not afford and consequently costing the charity's future. It's right that trustees have been disqualified and the charity will be removed from the register.

**Ends**

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## **[Access to parks and public spaces, including burial grounds and cemeteries](#)**

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