

New Charity Inquiry: Avicenna Global

On 3 June 2019 the Charity Commission opened a statutory inquiry into Avicenna Global ([1152587](#)) due to concerns over potential misconduct and/or mismanagement at the charity.

The Commission had previously opened a regulatory compliance case after serious allegations were made regarding the financial conduct of one of the charity's trustees. As part of this case, the Commission inspected the charity's records and found a number of serious regulatory concerns.

The charity's relationship with Avicenna Academy School, a Sheffield-based school, is unclear. The Commission is concerned that the school may have previously been operated by the charity before it was transferred to a trustee.

The Commission is also concerned about the charity's current board and its ability to manage conflicts of interest and make independent decisions, particularly given that two of the four trustees are siblings and a third is their brother-in-law. A relative of a trustee has also been the independent examiner on the charity's accounts.

The inquiry will:

- determine whether the Avicenna Academy School was ever owned and operated by the charity
- if Avicenna Academy School was but is no longer part of the charity, determine whether the decision to transfer the school to a third party was made lawfully, in accordance with the charity's governing document and in the best interests of the charity
- establish whether there has been any unauthorised trustee benefit
- establish whether the trustees have exercised their duties as trustees in the governance of the charity, and in particular their duty to account for the charity's funds and the management of conflicts of interest.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends.

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales; our role is to regulate charity trustees' compliance with the charity law framework.

Consultation on major A428 upgrade to enter its final week

A major consultation on updated plans to transform one of the busiest roads in the East of England will soon enter its final week with Highways England encouraging as many people as possible to have their say.

In updated plans put on show in June 2019, commuters using the A428 between Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire could save up to an hour and a half on their journeys every week using a new 10-mile dual carriageway linking the Black Cat roundabout in Bedfordshire to the Caxton Gibbet roundabout in Cambridgeshire. Both roundabouts would also be upgraded into modern, free-flowing junctions and a new junction would be added at Cambridge Road near St Neots.

The project would replace the only remaining section of single carriageway between Milton Keynes and Cambridge and tackle one of the region's most notorious congestion hotspots.

Highways England is currently engaging in eight weeks of consultation events, pop up events and mobile visitor centre visits to villages and towns to gather drivers, business owners and local people views to help shape the plans.

Sandy, St Neots and Cambourne were among the places that have hosted public information events, while the project team has also taken the consultation on the road to towns such as Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge..

Highways England A428 programme lead Lee Galloway said:

Over the past seven weeks it has been hugely encouraging to hear from more than two thousand drivers, business owners and local residents who have stopped by at one of our events to express their views on the scheme.

The current A428 carries twice the traffic it was designed for and cuts through small communities and villages. It can get painfully congested – in fact delays are currently in the top 20 per cent nationwide. Our plans will make a real difference, improving people's journeys, and it's not too late to let us know what you think of them.

People have until midnight on Sunday 28 July 2019 to respond to the consultation, with copies of the consultation booklet and scheme plans available online. Your feedback is extremely important – it will help us identify any themes or consistent concerns allowing us

to address them before moving forward with the next phase of the project.

People wanting to get a full 3D immersive experience of the proposed Black Cat junction can now do so using augmented reality through the new A428 scheme app – available on Google Play and the App Store. While the younger generation can explore the entire scheme on Minecraft, created using more than 2.6 billion blocks.

People can respond to the consultation by visiting the [scheme website](#). Copies of the consultation booklet are also available at local council offices and libraries.

The consultation closes at 23:59 on Sunday 28 July 2019.

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.

[Highways England unveils successful air quality and innovation competition entries](#)

The technology would inform drivers of the time remaining before traffic lights will change to green at junctions and suggest an appropriate speed, reducing the need for vehicles to stop on exit slip roads, which in turn could improve air quality by reducing the stop-starting of vehicles.

The project was among 11 initiatives which could tackle air quality around the country's motorways and major A roads which have awarded funding from Highways England.

The company is also set to give a financial boost to a further 13 ideas that could revolutionise roads and driving.

Mike Wilson, Highways England's Executive Director for Safety, Engineering and Standards, said:

We are delighted to be able to offer this funding to support ideas which have the potential to improve the environment around our roads, for people's journeys and local communities.

We have been seeking innovative ideas which could save lives, reduce congestion or improve air quality, and the competitions have proved a great success with so many great ideas submitted and something we will consider repeating in the future.

Highways England launched two multi-million-pound competitions, worth up to £20 million, earlier this year to encourage the country's most creative minds to come up with innovative ideas to change the way the country's motorways and major A roads are designed, managed and used.

The company received more than 200 applications from a more diverse network of innovators, with just over a third from micro companies with less than 10 employees. The projects being funded included new construction materials, different ways of tackling air quality and better use of technology to provide people with a range of information.

One competition is for unproven feasibility projects which through a second phase closed competition could be further funded for development. The other competition is for proven projects at development stage.

The funding will come from two of Highways England's designated funds – ring-fenced money which the company has set aside – for innovation and air quality projects. The competition was facilitated by Innovate UK as a small business research initiative. The awards are subject to contract negotiations.

Highways England is delivering the Government's current £15bn road investment programme and paving the way for the second programme which will start in April 2020.

In June 2018 the company launched an ['innovation portal'](#) – an online platform to help identify projects which could make roads safer for motorists and road workers, improve how information reaches those travelling around or help deliver an ambitious roads programme. In October it showcased to an international audience pioneering work to transform journeys with innovative technology allowing vehicles and the roads to 'talk' to each other.

The full list of entries that will receive funding, subject to contract negotiations, is:

Air Quality

- Dynamic air quality management – Amey OW limited
- Network Emissions/Vehicle Flow Management Adjustment – Aimsun Limited
- Green Light Optimised Speed Advisory – Amey OW limited
- Showcasing artificial intelligence – Clytell UK Limited
- Feasibility of tool to assess air quality impacts of elevated roads – Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants Ltd
- Clean efficient off grid electric vehicle charging – Intelligent Power

Generation Limited IPG

- Simplifai integrated corridor management – Simplifai systems limited
- Biotecture active airflow living wall – Biotecture
- Incentivising drivers to lessen emissions – RBD holdings limited
- Motorway charging using thermo-mechanical energy storage – Cheesecake energy Ltd
- Flywheel fast charging station – Gyrotricity LTD

Innovation

- Digitally enabled and assured product based bridges – Laing O’Rourke
- Connected Digital Roads – Costain Group PLC
- Flexible, future-proof edge compute services for connected vehicles and advanced road operation – Vodafone Group Services Limited
- Video analytics service – Costain Group PLC
- Sustainable asphalt – BAM
- SRN impact – Travel AI
- Road Asset Geometry and Condition Data Capture – Bentley Systems
- Secure real time API for innovation and data monetisation – Alchera Technologies
- Connected and autonomous vehicles infrastructure appraisal readiness – Galliford Try
- Motorway Mobility – Connected Places Catapult
- Very High-Speed Communications Infrastructure – Ingram Networks LTD
- Intelligent Environmental Estate – Ramboll
- The use of eCall data to identify road incidents and hazards – Chiltech Limited

You can find [summaries of the projects online](#).

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Local authority schools to be more transparent and accountable

As part of a drive to make financial reporting across all types of schools more consistent, the Department for Education has today (Wednesday 17 July) invited views from across the education system on applying some of the

financial measures used in academies to local authority run schools.

Academy trusts already have strong financial reporting measures in place, including requirements to publish their annual accounts, declare or seek approval for related party transactions and report on high pay for executive staff.

Today's consultation sets out proposals for these arrangements to be adopted by local authority maintained schools to help strengthen their transparency and financial health, bringing them in-line with the requirements and high standards that academy trusts already have to meet.

Academies Minister Lord Agnew said:

In everything we have done to strengthen the way schools are run since 2010, we can be certain that an unprecedented level of accountability and transparency has been brought into academy finances, with these robust processes allowing us to spot financial mismanagement quickly and intervene where we need to.

We know that many local authorities do a good job in overseeing the financial affairs of their schools, but the accountability arrangements typically in place in their schools are not equal to that of academies.

It makes sense for both parents, and the entire education sector, that the financial reporting and accountability measures of academies are extended to local authority maintained schools, ensuring consistency across our entire state funded education system.

That is why we are consulting on this, to bring parity between the financial transparency measures of local authority run schools and academies.

Today's consultation doubles up the efforts of Lord Agnew to clamp down on financial mismanagement in all types of schools across the country and to ensure that local authority schools are reporting on their financial affairs in the same way that academies are already required to do.

The proposed changes follow data collected in from 2016 to 2018, which showed that across England, a larger percentage of maintained schools had an accumulated deficit compared to academy trusts, and the rise in 2017-18 continued to be higher in maintained schools.

The greater transparency of finances in academies enables us to identify problems more quickly and intervene where we need to, and so the current measures used in academies presents a strong case for considering adapting and implementing the same controls across the maintained schools sector.

This will help strengthen arrangements for maintained schools and reduce the

future likelihood of growing deficits or misuse of funds in those schools.

As part of the consultation, the department will also consider how any new arrangements may create additional burdens, and so the benefits of any new changes introduced for transparency measures will need to outweigh any burdens on local authorities and schools.

Today also builds on the new Setting Executive Pay guidance, published by the Department last week, which provides clear guidance and advice to academy trust boards on what they should be considering when deciding senior staff salaries.

Governor Dakin's inaugural speech: 15 July 2019

His Honour the Speaker, Your Ladyship the Chief Justice, the Honourable Premier, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Her Excellency the Deputy Governor, the Honourable Attorney General, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Members of this Honourable House, the Commissioner of Police, ladies and gentlemen, family.

And, through your various representational roles, my greetings to the people of these islands, a community I hope I will soon be able to call friends.

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity of addressing this House a thank you I extend to the Honourable Premier, and to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for their welcome, not only to myself but also my family.

As experienced leaders you will have chosen your words with care and I look forward to weighing those words accordingly.

To reply today to the important points you make would suggest I have arrived with an agenda prepared in London; you will all be relieved to hear that I don't. My views can wait until I am better informed, through detailed conversations with you.

In truth, I come with only one idea: 'To preserve and to improve'. I'll explain this in a moment.

Let me first though properly introduce you to my family, supporting me here today. Mandy my extraordinary wife, who you will find ready to contribute a great deal to these islands. Charlie – our daughter – an International Relations graduate now deeply engaged on environmental issues, and Fraser – our son – an undergraduate studying engineering.

You, I know, understand the importance of family in the way I've just

described a family. You also use the imagery of family – rather beautifully I think – to describe the wider islands that I'm now Governor of: "the family islands". I look forward to getting to know this new family.

A word about first impressions.

This is not our first time in these islands; our family have previously arrived in a particularly important capacity. We arrived as tourists; the economic engine of this country and on which so much of these islands future depends.

We expected the beauty – we'd of course seen the pictures. We anticipated the weather – we'd consulted the forecast. What we didn't expect was the genuine warmth of the people we met. If it's the beaches that brought us here it's the people that would bring us back.

Every person: the immigration officer; the representative of the car hire firm in Provo; the taxi driver in Grand Turk; the waitress; the bartender; the police officer that helped us at the fish fry; the owner of the accommodation we stayed at; the power boat skipper who took us down the islands; all were outstanding Ambassadors for this country. All four of us are delighted to be back.

To substance. The greatest courtesy I can now pay you is to be both brief (I will take little more than 5 minutes) – and to be clear – (I will make just 6 points). Four words that you may choose to hold me to account to, one thought about the Constitution and I'll end talking about my priorities.

The first word is 'Care'. I may be a true Brit, but I'm a Brit who cares deeply about the UK's relationship with the Caribbean, and the Caribbean's relationship with the UK. With a Bajan wife, whose family has lived on that island for centuries, and children who enjoy joint Bajan / British nationality how could I be anything, but.

I've been in the Caribbean every year for the last 35 years and visited many of the islands in this region. Nearly 33 years ago I married Mandy in St Georges Church, Barbados. One of our children was christened in St Ambrose Church, St Michael, Barbados.

I therefore promise to 'care' about the people and the future of these islands, an easy promise to make, and an easy promise to keep, because both myself and my family have cared about the future of this region for a very long time.

You will find I will take my responsibility to represent the interests of the Turks and Caicos Islands seriously and diligently.

The second word is 'Listen'. Long standing connections to this region ensure that I at least know how much I don't know. I have some insight to island life. I know how hard I will have to work to understand a rich and complex society that few – who have not lived in the Caribbean – can properly understand.

As a result you will find me inquisitive, I aspire to be one of the most informed people on these islands. Whoever you are, you will find that I will ask a lot of questions. You all, I think, have a right to be heard – and I have a duty to listen.

So I promise to seek to understand the collective wisdom of these islands by listening to as many people as I can – from as many different walks of life as I can; I promise to ‘listen’.

The third word is ‘Service’. I was introduced to public service in 1982 when I joined the British Army. Six months later, at the age of 19, I was leading thirty soldiers on operations. That was 37 years ago and this word ‘service’ has been tested every day since then.

The cap badge at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst – where I started my first career aged 18 – does not read “Lead to Serve”. You do not ‘serve’ through your ‘leadership’ – quite the opposite. The cap badge at Sandhurst reads: “Serve to Lead”.

The truth is that the quality of a person’s leadership is based only on the quality of their service, and the quality of their service boils down to putting others first. So I promise, as your Governor, that I will not only be Her Majesty’s servant in these islands, but I will also be your servant.

Being clear and straight: This final word, and we need not dwell on this because you will – in the end – judge me as you see it – is that you will find me ‘clear’ and by being clear you will find me ‘straight’.

To ‘care’, to ‘listen’ to ‘serve’ and to be ‘straight’ seem to me four good words, four good anchors, to be held accountable to.

I promised a word about the constitution. I am the 15th Governor of these Islands. Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, has appointed all 15. She had been crowned twenty years before the first Governor – Alexander Mitchell – was appointed by her. All fifteen Governors received their commission from her, to be her representative as Head of State.

I am genuinely touched by the spotlight you place on me today, but in truth whoever the individual Governor is, is not the issue. It is instead what the office of Governor represents: continuity, the link to the Crown and to Britain, and the Governor’s application of the constitution that is important.

It is important because it ensures everyone in these islands, and anyone wishing to travel to her, or invest in her, understands that through the Constitution it is the rule of law that prevails here and all are equal here before the law.

An investment here is safe, because the law keeps it safe. A person’s human rights are in the end guaranteed here because the law demands those rights be protected.

Conversations about the constitution become immediately complex but let me –

for the moment – keep things simple. The key test is that a Constitution has to be good enough to weather the bad times as well as the good. To take in its stride not just the sort of outstanding leaders who spoke before me today, the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, but those whose intentions, perhaps long in the future, may be less selfless than the standard that all of us in this room aspire to now.

It's why the oath I swore at the start of these proceedings is taken by all of you so seriously and why it is – to me – the island's sword and shield; something I must steward diligently.

I am acutely aware that as Head of State I am appointed rather than elected. I have the greatest respect for those politicians amongst you, who face an electorate. As a result you – as well as Her Majesty who appointed me as her representative – have every right to demand, in your Head of State, Statesman like qualities. Today is my first step on a journey to earn the right to be judged in that way.

In the 18th century the political philosopher Burke offered advice. His definition of a statesman was: "A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve". That seems to me to remain a good aiming mark in the 21st century Turks and Caicos Islands. To preserve and improve. You will find that I'm interested in making a practical, positive, difference.

So I'm interested in supporting all those helping educate, protect, develop and care for all that call these islands home, including the most vulnerable. I'm equally interested in supporting those who are focused on business, tourism and diversifying the economy. We all rely on wealth creators.

We can all learn from the next generation – I have – and there will be a particular place, in my heart, for those who understand that the stewardship of our environment offers not just benefits here, but also the opportunity for the Turks and Caicos Islands to have a genuine global voice.

That's a global voice in what will be one of the predictable themes of this century, something critical we must steward for those that come behind us. Fortunately it's a fast developing UK priority. On the environment we – the Turks and Caicos Islands, Britain and all the Overseas Territories – are more influential and stronger together than we can ever be apart.

In starting a new role though it's critical to have early focus – my early focus will be on properly understanding issues relating to crime, illegal immigration and hurricane preparedness. My programme has been prepared with that in mind.

That's enough talk. I start my agenda – such as it is – to work with you all to 'preserve and to improve'. In the end this is going to be a Governorship based on values. Whether I 'care', 'listen', 'serve' and whether I'm 'straight' will best be judged by my actions rather than my words. I'm now keen to get to work.

And may God bless the Turks and Caicos Islands.