

Statement to parliament: Written Ministerial Statement on Secretary of State's 'minded to' intervene decision.

My Department has today written to Lebedev Holdings Limited (LHL) and Independent Digital News and Media Limited (IDNM), the owners of the Evening Standard and the Independent, to inform them that I am 'minded to' issue an Intervention Notice. This relates to concerns I have that there may be public interest considerations – as set out in section 58 of Enterprise Act 2002 – that are relevant to the recent acquisition of a 30% stake by the International Media Company (IMC) in LHL and the linked transaction involving the acquisition of a 30% stake by Scalable LP in IDNM and that these concerns warrant further investigation.

A 'minded to' letter has therefore been issued to the parties on one public interest ground specified in section 58 of the Enterprise Act 2002:

(2A) The need for (a) accurate presentation of news; and (b) free expression of opinion.

It is important to note that I have not taken a final decision on intervention at this stage. In line with the statutory guidance on media mergers, the 'minded to' letter invites further representations in writing from the parties and gives them until 5pm on Monday 17 June to respond. I plan to make my final decision, which needs to be made on a quasi judicial basis, on whether to issue an Intervention Notice no later than week commencing 24 June.

If I decide to issue an Intervention Notice, the next stage would be for Ofcom to assess and report to me on the public interest concerns and for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to assess and report to me on whether a relevant merger situation has been created and any impact this may have on competition. Following these reports, I would need to decide whether to refer the matter for a more detailed investigation by the CMA under section 45 of the Enterprise Act 2002.

In view of the time it has taken to obtain sufficient information to reach this point I have asked the parties to agree to extend the statutory time limit to allow Ofcom and the Competitions and Markets Authority to report to me on the public interest issues raised by the transaction.

I will keep Parliament updated on progress with this media merger case.

Press release: UK praises strong Nepal relationship following Prime Minister Oli's visit

The UK and Nepal have reaffirmed their strong friendship following a visit by Nepali Prime Minister Oli to the UK, and set out areas to deepen the relationship.

These include strengthening agreements on Gurkha service in the British Army, as well as supporting inward investment from the UK to Nepal, and the importance of tackling climate change challenges as an international priority.

Prime Minister Oli's visit concluded yesterday with Foreign Ministers from the UK and Nepal agreeing a Joint Statement setting out Britain's support for Prime Minister Oli's 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' agenda, by working to promote investment and support improvements in the business environment to ensure sustainable economic growth in Nepal.

It also reiterates both countries' commitment to uphold the rules-based international system and multilateral co-operation, particularly on human rights and international human trafficking. The UK looks forward to Nepal's ratification of the Palermo Protocol this year.

Speaking at a reception at the Nepali Embassy yesterday, Minister for Asia Mark Field said:

The distinguished service of Gurkhas in the British Army is a source of immense pride in both our countries and is the keystone of the unique bond between us.

Britain is already playing an important role in Nepal, particularly through our aid assistance in the wake of the 2015 earthquakes, and I want to see that complemented by more trade and investment, and for us to work together on tackling climate change – not just in Britain and Nepal but around the world.

The three-day visit by the Prime Minister of Nepal was the first to the UK since Nepal became a republic in 2008, and his programme included meetings with Prime Minister Theresa May, HRH the Duke of Sussex, Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster, and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Nepal.

Following his meeting with the Prime Minister on Wednesday, Prime Minister Oli visited Sandhurst with Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster where they

attended a reception dinner at the Gurkha Headquarters and saw the Brigade of Gurkhas practice military drills.

Notes to editors

- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Nepali Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MOFA) 'Joint UK-Nepal communiqué on the occasion of the visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to the United Kingdom, 10-12th June 2019' is online [here](#).

Honorary Queen's Counsel nominations: deadline Tuesday 27 August 2019

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) is inviting nominations for appointment as Queen's Counsel Honoris Causa. Nomination forms must be completed and returned to MOJ by 12pm on Tuesday 27 August 2019.

Honoris Causa, or Honorary QC, is an honorary award unique to the legal profession. It is a dedicated opportunity, made by royal prerogative, to recognise those in the profession who have made a major contribution to, and impact on, the law of England and Wales and how it is advanced, outside the courtroom.

We are looking for high-quality nominations to award those who have made a significant, positive impact either on the shape of the law of England and Wales, or on the profession. More details on what we mean by 'significant, positive impact', and who is eligible, follow.

What is the award for?

Honorary QC is an opportunity to award individuals who have made a major contribution to the law of England and Wales outside practice in the courts.

This criterion can be interpreted broadly, either as a major contribution to the shape of the law (for example, by influencing case law), or to how it is advanced (for example, by positively impacting the shape of the profession). What is most important is that nominations clearly demonstrate the significant, positive impact an individual's efforts have had.

Examples of what these different contributions may look like are:

- Making an impact on the law by influencing legislation or case law (e.g. through academic research, particular personal impact through engagement or campaigning, or pro bono work).
- Making a considerable impact on the legal profession as a whole (e.g. through initiatives that have an impact on social mobility or diversity,

innovation in legal education, or that promote UK legal services overseas and increase the competitiveness of the sector).

- Making an impact through a standout achievement or through innovation (e.g. by breaking through into new territory and making an impact through LawTech).

It is not a long-service award – honours may be awarded for a significant impact over a long period of time, but they may equally be awarded for such an impact over a shorter period – the scale of impact is what is important.

We are keen to recognise the diversity within the profession, with awards that reflect the range of different legal careers that make up the profession as a whole. You can see examples of previous successful nominees by viewing some [case studies of successful nominations](#) (PDF, 110KB, 1 page) .

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for the award, the individual must be a qualified lawyer or legal academic. The nomination must be for achievement outside practice in the courts. In other words, an award would be made for non-advocacy work.

Examples of those eligible may include (but are not limited to):

- Solicitors without higher rights of audience
- Legal executives
- In-house lawyers, including counsel
- Legal academics

Holding a fee-paid judicial office in addition to normal practice would not exclude lawyers who meet the eligibility criteria above.

The award is not a working rank, and is separate to substantive QC appointments. Where someone is eligible to apply for silk in their role, we would not normally consider them for an Honorary QC award.

Where someone from outside the legal profession has made a significant impact on the law of England and Wales, or how it is advanced, they would not qualify for this award. We would welcome those nominations as part of the [main honours system](#).

There is no exact equivalent in Scotland or Northern Ireland. However, this does not mean that achievements of a similar nature cannot be recognised in those jurisdictions. If you would like to nominate someone for an honour whose work is in Scotland or Northern Ireland, you can contact the [Scottish Government](#) or the [Honours Secretariat for Northern Ireland](#).

Someone who has been honoured in the main honours system in the last year, or who has been nominated for such an honour this year, is unlikely to be successfully nominated for an Honorary QC award, unless there has been exceptional additional work since the honour was awarded.

Please note that anyone nominated may be subject to criminal record checks with ACRO Criminal Records Office.

How to make a nomination

We welcome nominations for Honorary QC from anyone, including from people outside the legal profession, who can explain the impact the nominee has made.

Please make sure nominations are made on the [Honorary QC nomination form](#) (MS Word Document, 90KB) , as we will only accept nominations which are submitted on this form.

When completing the form, please explain the contribution that has been made, providing clear evidence of its impact. We would advise against simply providing a career history of the nominee, and suggest keeping your nomination to a limit of 500 words.

You may nominate as many people as you like, but please ensure that you keep their details separate.

You need to complete the nomination form and send it to us by 12pm on Tuesday 27 August 2019 preferably by email or alternatively post to:

Legal Services Team
Ministry of Justice
Post Point 9.20
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

Email: honoraryqc@justice.gov.uk

Timing

Please ensure that your nominations reach us no later than 12pm on Tuesday 27 August 2019. Nominations made after this date cannot be accepted.

How are awards made?

The process is administered by MOJ. Nominations are considered against the criterion by a panel of representatives from the legal profession, civil service, judiciary, and academia, which is chaired by MOJ.

Recommendations are then made to the Lord Chancellor, whose role is to ensure that the process has been carried out in a fair, open and transparent way. The recommendations are then referred to the Queen for agreement, who grants the awards under the royal prerogative.

Contact us

If you would like additional information on Honorary QC awards or how to make a nomination, please feel free to contact us by email:
honoraryqc@justice.gov.uk.

[News story: Voting rights treaty secured with Portugal](#)

The treaty signed by Lord Callanan and Secretary of State Ana Paula Zacarias, today (12 June 2019) means that UK nationals living in Portugal and Portuguese citizens in the UK can continue to participate in local elections in the future.

We welcome this significant treaty that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between the UK and Portugal, underlines our shared commitment to democracy, and most importantly enables these citizens to continue to determine who represents them in the country they reside in.

We continue to explore bilateral treaties to secure rights for UK nationals across the EU and we are approaching all EU Member States on this subject.

Brexit Minister Lord Callanan said: “The oldest diplomatic agreement was signed between the UK and Portugal in 1386, now, over 600 years later, we’ve signed a treaty to secure the rights of our citizens in each other’s countries after the UK leaves the EU.

This agreement gives further guarantees to UK nationals in Portugal, and Portuguese nationals in the UK, that our historic alliance is still strong and their democratic right to vote will be protected, in any Brexit scenario.

LINKS TO OTHER USEFUL INFO:

[Living in Portugal guide](#)

[Types of election, referendums, and who can vote](#)

[Press release: 4 Berkshire estate agents accused of illegally fixing fees](#)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has provisionally found that the companies – Michael Hardy, Prospect, Richard Worth and Romans – broke

competition law by taking part in a price-fixing cartel where members set minimum levels of commission fees for the sale of residential properties. The alleged cartel took place in the Berkshire area from at least September 2008 and lasted for almost 7 years.

The result of such price-fixing is that homeowners may be denied the chance of securing the best possible deal when selling their properties, as they are unable to shop around all of their local agents for better rates.

In a Statement of Objections issued today, the CMA has provisionally found that the four estate agents:

- agreed that they would all apply minimum commission rates for residential property sales
- exchanged confidential pricing information
- held meetings and colluded to make sure that they were all enforcing and maintaining the agreed minimum commission rates.

Howard Cartlidge, Senior Director, Cartels, said:

Everyone knows selling your home is expensive. So it's important that people should be able to shop around all of their local estate agents to make sure they are getting the best possible deal.

Estate agents who conspire to set minimum commission rates are cheating homeowners and breaking the law. Where we find evidence that this is happening, we will not hesitate to take action to protect people selling their home.

Today's findings in the Statement of Objections are provisional and will not necessarily lead to a decision that the companies have breached competition law. The companies now have the opportunity to consider the detail of the CMA's provisional findings and respond to it. The CMA will carefully consider any responses before any final decision is made.

Tackling cartels is a fundamental part of the CMA's work, and this is the third case brought against estate agents in recent years. Previous actions include [fining 4 estate agents in Somerset over £370,000](#) for colluding to set minimum commission rates, and charging [3 members of the Three Counties Estate Agent Association £735,000](#) for breaking competition law in relation to estate agent and letting fees.

The CMA also has an ongoing [Stop Cartels](#) campaign, which aims to educate business about which practices break the law and urges people to come forward if they suspect a company has taken part in cartel behaviour, such as fixing prices or rigging contracts. The campaign explains what anti-competitive behaviours are, why they are illegal, the impact they have on customers and the economy, and why they should be reported.

Notes to editors:

1. The Chapter I prohibition in the Competition Act 1998 prohibits agreements, practices and conduct that may have a damaging effect on competition in the UK. The Chapter I prohibition covers anti-competitive agreements and concerted practices between businesses ('undertakings') which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the UK or a part of it and which may affect trade within the UK or a part of it. Any business found to have infringed the prohibition can be fined up to 10% of its annual worldwide group turnover.
2. A Statement of Objections gives parties notice of a proposed infringement decision under the competition law prohibitions in the Competition Act 1998. It is a provisional decision only and will not necessarily lead to an infringement decision. Parties have the opportunity to make written and oral representations on the matters set out in the Statement of Objections. Any such representations will be considered by the CMA before any final decision is made. The final decision will be taken by a case decision group, which is separate from the case investigation team and was not involved in the decision to issue the Statement of Objections.
3. The four estate agents are: i) Michael Hardy & Company (Wokingham) Ltd and Geocharbert UK Ltd – together known as Michael Hardy. ii) Prospect Estate Agency Ltd and Prospect Holdings (Reading) Ltd– together known as Prospect. iii) Richard Worth Ltd (in administration) and Richard Worth Holdings Ltd – together known as Richard Worth. The company, Adelfas Property Group Ltd, currently trading as Richard Worth Estate and Land Agents is not one of the companies subject of this provisional decision. iv) The Romans Group (UK) Ltd and Romans 1 Ltd – together known as Romans.
4. All information relating to this case can be found on the CMA [case page](#).
5. For more information on the CMA see our [homepage](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and like our [Facebook](#) page. Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on Competition Act 1998 and cartels cases.
6. Media enquiries should be directed to the CMA Press Office at press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.