

Press release: Raising false invoices sees Sheffield directors disqualified

Michael O'Toole, 56 of Sheffield and Mark Rice, 39 of Sheffield both provided an eight year disqualification undertaking to the Secretary of State in respect of their conduct. Mr O'Toole's disqualification commenced on 6 July 2017 and Mr Rice's ban began on 28 June 2017.

An Insolvency Service investigation found invoices totaling £760,000 had been factored, of which only one, of £45,000, was found to be a true invoice.

Commenting on the disqualification, Martin Gitner, Deputy Chief Investigator of Insolvent Investigations, Midlands & West at the Insolvency Service, said:

The directors failed to run their business in accordance with the terms set out in its agreement with the invoice discount facility provider.

The company obtained money to which it was not entitled by submitting details of sales invoices which did not exist and this caused the provider to incur financial losses.

Using false documents is contrary to the conduct expected of a company director and the Insolvency Service has strong enforcement powers which we will not hesitate to use to remove dishonest or reckless directors from operating a business in an environment with the benefit of limited liability.

Notes to editors

Plast-Tec Plastering Systems Limited (CR0 No. 06402826). The company's registered office was at Neepsend Triangle Business Park, Burton Road, South Yorkshire, S3 8BW.

Mr O'Toole's date of birth is 17 June 1961 and he resides in Sheffield. He was appointed as a director on 1 December 2013.

Mr Rice's date of birth is 27 September 1977 and he resides in Sheffield. He was a director from incorporation on 18 October 2007.

The matters of unfitness, which Mr O'Toole did not dispute in the Disqualification Undertaking, were that:

Between December 2015 and April 2016, I caused Plast-Tec Plastering

Systems Limited (PTPS) to factor false invoices totalling at least £715,000 to Lloyds TSB Commercial Finance..

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Between December 2015 and April 2016, I caused Plast-Tec Plastering Systems Limited (PTPS) to factor false invoices totalling at least £715,000 to Lloyds TSB Commercial Finance.

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

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.

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

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Press release: Louth and Horncastle flood alleviation schemes formally opened

Two Flood Alleviation Schemes (FASs) in Louth and Horncastle which collectively reduce flood risk to over 350 properties have been formally opened on 28 July, following successful completion of the projects.

Construction on the £6.5m Louth scheme and the £8.1m Horncastle scheme started in summer 2015, and were finalised this month. The two projects were delivered in a partnership of the Environment Agency, Lincolnshire County Council, East Lindsey District Council, Anglian Water and the Lindsey Marsh and Witham Third Internal Drainage Boards. Louth and Horncastle Town Councils will fund ongoing maintenance on the schemes. The development of the two schemes was led by the Environment Agency, with construction being carried out by its contractors.

Communities in Louth and Horncastle were significantly affected by the floods of summer 2007, when over 200 properties in the area were flooded. Close partnership working has since helped fund and made the two Flood Alleviation Schemes possible.

The Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme consists of a single flood storage reservoir on the River Bain, upstream of the town of Horncastle. As part of this scheme, a number of residents whose homes are at risk of flooding from the river Waring were offered property-level flood protection, such as air brick covers and flood doors. The Louth Flood Alleviation Scheme consists of a flood storage reservoir on the Northern branch of the River Lud, and one on the Southern branch of the river.

In addition to reducing flood risk to hundreds of properties in Louth and Horncastle, the two schemes also deliver benefits to the environment. In Horncastle, partners have created a large lake and wetland area which will provide a habitat for water voles. At the reservoirs in Louth, additional water vole habitat will also be created.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

These flood schemes are fantastic news for Lincolnshire, giving hundreds of people in Louth and Horncastle precious peace of mind. And there is more development to come across the county, with £160 million planned investment here over the next four years to better protect around 30,000 homes.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

I am delighted that our partnership work with the community and local authorities in Louth and Horncastle will reduce flood risk to over 350 properties and support wildlife.

People here understand the devastating impact of flooding and the tenth anniversary of the 2007 floods is a timely reminder of the real threat posed by severe weather. I ask everyone to check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and look for advice about flooding on GOV.uk.

Councillor Colin Davie, Executive Member for Economy and Place at Lincolnshire County Council, said:

One of the council's top priorities is protecting our residents from flooding. That's why we're working hard with our partners to do everything we can to reduce the risk to Lincolnshire homes. The opening of these new defences is a testament to the hard work of all involved, and will make a significant difference to the lives of people living in these communities. I'm delighted we've been able to make this happen.

Cllr Eddy Poll, Executive Member for Environmental Management at Lincolnshire County Council and Chairman of the Anglian Northern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, said:

We all know the kind of devastation flooding can cause within a community – that's why projects like this are so vital. These new defences will protect hundreds of local families from the misery and disruption that flooding brings. It's impossible to prevent flooding entirely, but we'll continue to work with our partners to ensure that local communities are as well-defended and well-prepared as possible.

The Leader of the East Lindsey District Council, Councillor Craig Leyland said:

This is an important milestone in the work of the Environment Agency jointly with other authorities and we have been extremely pleased to have contributed £1million to these essential schemes to help reduce the risk of flooding to our residents and businesses. After the devastating flooding that we have seen in 2007, we hope that these schemes will give residents greater peace of mind and protection from the risk and threat of flooding in the future.

The Mayor of Louth, Councillor Pauline Watson said:

Louth is celebrating the increased flood protection for the town which is the culmination of ten years of heartfelt campaigning and unprecedented partnership working, both between statutory bodies and ordinary townsfolk.

[News story: Brexit Minister concludes two day tour of Scotland](#)

Reaffirming the Government's commitment to work with all parts of the UK as we leave the EU, Minister for Exiting the EU Robin Walker embarked on a two day tour across Scotland this week.

With negotiations firmly underway, the visit comes as the UK Government has stepped up its engagement with businesses from all parts of the United Kingdom. During the trip, the Minister travelled across the country, hearing from a wide range of Scottish industries, from farming and fishing to life sciences and energy.

He attended roundtables on financial services and oil and gas, and met with representatives from the Scottish Whisky Association and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. He also paid visits to the Easter Grangemuir Farm in Fife and ROVOP in Aberdeen.

UK Government Minister for Exiting the EU, Robin Walker, said:

Over the past two days, I've met with many of Scotland's most important sectors about their priorities as we leave the European Union.

We've been crystal clear that we want businesses to work as freely as they do now, which is why we're determined to work with businesses from all parts of the UK to protect our internal market and get a deal that works in the interest of the whole of the United Kingdom."

Earlier this month, the UK Government introduced the Repeal Bill which will transfer all EU law into UK law on exit day. As part of the process, it is expected that there will be a significant increase in the decision making power of each devolved administration.

As powers are repatriated from the EU, the Government will ensure they are exercised within the UK in a way that ensures no new barriers to living and doing business within the UK are created.

This will protect the UK internal market, ensuring we have the ability to strike the best trade deals around the world, protect our common resources, and fulfil our international obligations.

The UK Government is continuing to have intensive discussions with the devolved administrations, which will identify where we need to retain common frameworks and what these should be.

[News story: Commercialising quantum: extra £3 million available](#)

Additional funding for UK businesses and researchers to realise the potential of quantum technologies brings total up to £9 million.

Up to £9 million is now available for UK businesses and research organisations to work together to understand the feasibility of quantum technologies and develop the market.

Innovate UK will invest up to £6 million, with an additional £3 million co-funding announced from the [Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council](#) (EPSRC). It is being run as part of the [UK National Quantum Technologies Programme](#), government's £270 million commitment.

The opportunities of quantum

The emerging quantum technologies sector is valued at £1 billion and offers substantial opportunities for innovative UK businesses.

We are seeking collaborative feasibility studies that improve understanding of the technical capabilities of quantum technologies, and the market for these products or services.

Your project could be:

- technical, establishing the feasibility of devices that exploit quantum phenomena
- non-technical, analysing future markets, applications or business models

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is 20 September 2017
- projects must be collaborative, with either a UK business or research and technology organisation as the lead
- projects should last between 3 months and one year

- total project costs should be between £40,000 and £500,000
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News story: Vans to go greener and cleaner under new plans

Changes to driver licensing rules will make it easier for van drivers to switch to electric vehicles, the government has announced today (28 July 2017).

Van drivers will be able to operate heavier electric or gas-powered vehicles without having to apply for a new licence, as part of moves to improve air quality in towns and cities across the country.

The reforms are a step towards the government's aim for nearly all cars and vans on our roads to be zero emission by 2050.

Currently, a motorist with an ordinary category B licence for a car can drive a van weighing up to 3,500kg. Cleaner vans, especially those powered by electricity from batteries, are generally heavier than conventional diesel vans because of the battery they carry. This reduces the amount of goods they can carry or means van drivers have to apply for a category C licence with the associated costs and medical report requirements.

Now the Department for Transport has published [plans to allow motorists to drive vans weighing up to 4,250kg](#) if they are powered by electricity, natural gas, LPG or hydrogen.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

Vans have become essential to our economy and are vital for our builders, small businesses and delivery drivers. We have more of them on our roads than ever before. That's a good sign for the economy, but our challenge is to try to tackle their impact on air quality.

We want to make it easier for businesses to opt for cleaner vehicles, and these proposals are designed to do just that.

Road traffic estimates show there has been a rapid rise in light goods vehicle traffic over the last 20 years, in part powered by the growth in internet shopping.

In 2016 vans clocked up 49.1 billion vehicle miles – an increase of 23% when

compared with 2006. Vans spend much of their time driving around our towns and cities and over 96% of them are diesel powered so making them greener is essential for people's health and the environment.

Head of Fleet at Ocado Stuart Skingsley said:

At Ocado, we are very keen to incorporate the latest low-emission technologies in our vehicle fleet, but we have been unable to do so, due to the extra weight of the technology and category B licence restrictions.

This vital derogation would allow us to field the latest alternatively fuelled vans, reducing harmful emissions and improving the UK's air quality.

A [public consultation](#) is now open on the proposed new measures and will last 12 weeks. They will help level the playing field by addressing the payload penalty which currently puts operators of cleaner vans at a commercial disadvantage compared to operators of equivalent conventionally-fuelled vehicles.