

Statement by the Secretary of State in Response to Judgement from the High Court on the Omagh Judicial Review

Press release

The judgement in the Omagh Judicial Review was delivered at the High Court today. A statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, is below.



Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

“My deepest sympathies go out to all those affected by the Omagh bombing.

“It was a great tragedy which resulted in unimaginable suffering for the families of those tragically killed and injured. The impact of this atrocity was also felt by individuals and communities across Northern Ireland and further afield.

“I want again to put on record my sincere regret that the families of those killed and wounded have had to wait so long to find out what happened on that terrible day in 1998.

“We will now carefully consider the full judgement.”

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Vacancy for Chair at the Regulator of

Social Housing

News story

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is seeking to appoint a Chair at RSH to help guide the next phase of it's growth and development.



The role will require ensuring that the organisation continues to deliver in these more challenging times, and that going forward it can respond and evolve to delivering a more consumer-focused regulatory regime involving a significant change in the size and role of the organisation.

Applicants with a wide range of skills and backgrounds and experience leading an organisation through significant change are welcome to apply.

The vacancy will close on Monday 18 October.

See the advert on the [HM Government Public Appointments website](#).

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New Director and Deputy Head of the Attorney General's Office

News story

Doug Wilson OBE, Director General of the Attorney General's Office, is pleased to announce Kelby Harmes has been appointed Director and Deputy Head of the AGO.



Doug Wilson OBE, Director General of the Attorney General's Office (AGO), is pleased to announce Kelby Harmes has been appointed Director and Deputy Head of the AGO following an open competition with a strong field of candidates.

The appointment comes following Kelby's stint as interim Director and Deputy Head from October 2020 to July 2021.

Kelby was admitted as a barrister and solicitor in New Zealand in 1998 and worked there in various legal roles in the public and private sectors until 2003. He then moved to London and was admitted as a solicitor here in 2004. In 2003, Kelby joined the former Department for Constitutional Affairs, now known as the Ministry of Justice, before working as the Private Secretary to the Lord Chief Justice in 2005. He then moved to DCMS Legal Advisers where he was a senior lawyer advising on the London Olympics and Paralympics from 2005-2012.

After a stint as a Deputy Director back in New Zealand at the Ministry of Justice, Kelby returned to the UK and joined Cabinet Office Legal Advisers in 2015, before coming to the AGO in November 2018.

Commenting on the appointment, Doug said "I'm absolutely delighted to announce Kelby as my deputy at the AGO. Kelby is an inspiring leader and consummate professional whose advice and expertise is respected by the Law Officers and across Whitehall. I look forward to working with him and supporting AGO in making law and politics work together at the heart of government."

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Groupon commits to offer refunds and improve customer service

- CMA secures commitments from discount shopping website Groupon to

improve customer service and ensure accuracy of descriptions on its website

- Groupon will offer refunds to certain customers who were previously not offered refunds

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched an enforcement investigation into Groupon UK, an online marketplace that offers discounts and deals for a range of products and services, in April 2021. On 9 August, the CMA wrote to Groupon outlining its specific concerns about Groupon's compliance with consumer protection law and warning that if Groupon did not change its conduct it could face court action.

The CMA was concerned that Groupon was not responding satisfactorily to customer complaints and was not always providing customers with the refunds and other forms of redress, such as replacement items, to which the CMA considers they were legally entitled. For example, in cases where customers had not been provided with the goods or services that they had paid for, they were sometimes only offered Groupon credits instead of refunds.

The CMA also had concerns that the company was failing to ensure the accuracy of product descriptions, that products offered for sale were in stock and delivered within advertised timeframes, and that items were of a satisfactory quality.

Groupon has now signed formal commitments to the CMA that it will ensure that:

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

"So much of business relies on trust. It's essential that people shopping online receive what they ordered and are supported if things go wrong, quickly receiving any refund they are due.

"We welcome that Groupon has now committed to address concerns about customer service issues and ensure it is abiding by the law, so that people can feel more confident shopping online in the future."

As well as potentially breaking consumer protection law, Groupon UK was potentially in breach of the previous [undertakings](#) that it gave to the CMA's predecessor, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), in 2012. As part of these, Groupon UK pledged to ensure information on its website is not misleading and to comply with customers' legal cancellation and refund rights.

In order to ensure that Groupon abides by its latest commitments, the company will appoint a compliance officer – who will be responsible for ensuring Groupon adheres to the new undertakings – and will need to regularly report to the CMA on its progress. For more information, visit the [Groupon investigation](#) web page.

Notes to editors

1. Groupon UK is registered in the UK as MyCityDeal Limited.
 2. In addition to MyCityDeal Limited, the CMA wrote to and accepted formal commitments from other relevant entities within the Groupon corporate group that we consider have engaged in conduct that may be contrary to consumer law: Groupon Goods Global GmbH (registered in Switzerland) and Groupon, Inc (registered in USA). Together these are referred to as "Groupon".
 3. Groupon is an online shopping platform that sells goods and services to consumers. It also partners with business to provide digital vouchers designed to help customers save money when shopping in-store and online. Customers purchase vouchers from Groupon's website and app and use them to activate discounts at a range of businesses.
 4. The main provisions of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's concerns are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs), the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 (CCRs) and the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA).
 5. Groupon is offering refunds to certain customers who experienced problems with their purchase based on its customer service codes. The customer categories are contained in [Schedule 2 of the undertakings](#).
 6. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk
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[SMILE \(Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer\)](#)

Overview

- SMILE will use a new scientific technique to provide a fuller understanding of the Sun-Earth connection. It will deliver global 3D imaging of the Earth's magnetosphere for the first time and investigate its dynamic response to the impact of solar wind
- UK is providing the core scientific instrument, the Soft X-ray Imager (SXI), and co-leads the mission's scientific consortium
- The mission is the first full scale collaboration between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

The Earth's magnetosphere is the strongest of all the rocky planets in our Solar System and is thought to have played an important role in the Earth's habitability. Scientists believe that a key reason Mars lost most of its atmosphere and surface water was because it lost its magnetosphere.

SMILE is expected to answer three questions:

1. What are the fundamental modes of the dayside solar wind/magnetosphere interaction?
2. What defines the substorm cycle?
3. How do Coronal Mass Ejections-driven storms arise, and what is their relationship to substorms?

In order to answer these questions, SMILE will provide scientists with data and information on the location and shape of the outer magnetospheric boundaries (i.e., the magnetopause, the bow shock, and the magnetospheric cusps) and of the auroras, and how solar wind behaves next to these.

UK involvement

Leadership of the overall mission science and the SXI instrument enables the UK teams to shape its scientific data in line with their requirements and areas of expertise. In-depth instrument knowledge will mean that the UK research base is well placed to understand and exploit the data in the post-launch research and discovery phase.

Areas in which the UK is world leading – planetary science (Earth and beyond), solar physics, space plasma and astrophysics – are all served by the science explored by SMILE.

SMILE data will also provide real-world benefits by helping to improve scientific models used to forecast space weather.

Extreme space weather could disrupt modern technology by causing geomagnetic storms affecting satellite navigation, shortwave communications, and power grids. A recent ESA study estimated the potential socio-economic impact in Europe from a single, extreme space weather event could reach €15 billion. Much of this disruption could be avoided through accurate forecasting.

The UK SMILE team has already carried out preliminary work with the Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre in view of supporting their work with SMILE data.

Teledyne e2v, based in Chelmsford, are supplying the SXI CCD detector devices under an approx. £1.5M contract to ESA. Joint academic-industry knowledge exchange with Open University on the CCD development programme will improve space radiation hardness of the devices, maintaining this key UK technology for commercial sales and export opportunities.

UK company Photex Ltd has also been contracted to assemble the camera for the UVI instrument.

Further socioeconomic impact will be realised through:

- Technology development in X-ray detection instrumentation; the SXI detectors devices are the largest ever flown for X-ray detection
- Skills development in the academic institutes and the industrial supply chain
- Maintaining UK reputation and world leading status in SMILE science, leading to follow on projects, further funding
- New and strengthened international partnerships with China, Canada, and European consortium UK funding and roles

UK Space Agency funding of up to £10.5 million is agreed to support the UK roles below up to mission launch in 2023, with post launch support subject to further review.

Overall mission Co-Principal Investigator: Prof Graziella Branduardi-Raymont, UCL-MSSL. Leads mission level science development alongside Chinese counterpart Prof Chi Wang (Director of National Space Science Center, Chinese Academy of Sciences).

SXI instrument Principal Investigator: Dr Steven Sembay (University of Leicester). Leads European consortium building SXI instrument, with hardware and design contributions from international partners including Spain, Norway, Switzerland, US. Leicester led the overall telescope optics using innovative 'lobster-eye' micropore technology.

UCL-MSSL also provide SXI front end electronics (FEE), and Co-Investigator support role on Chinese led Light Ion Analyser instrument.

SXI Co-Investigator: Prof Andrew Holland (Open University). Testing and characterising performance of SXI instrument's CCD (Charged Couple Device) detectors.

SXI CCD detectors provided by Teledyne e2v (Chelmsford, UK) under separate contract to ESA.

Current status & next steps

- UK-China joint proposal selected by ESA and CAS in 2015
- Phase B1 study, and all instrument and mission level System Requirements Reviews, completed in 2018
- ESA Member States voted to formally adopt SMILE in March 2019
- SXI Preliminary Design Review complete in 2020
- SXI flight instrument delivery scheduled for mid-2023
- Launch date end of 2024