

Leicestershire sex offender's sentence doubled following undercover police operation

A Leicestershire sex offender, convicted after an undercover police investigation, has had his sentence doubled following an intervention by the Solicitor General, the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP.

Lewis Watts, 26, engaged in sexual communication with three different 12-year-old girls via social media, including graphic messages inciting one of the girls to engage in sexual activity. However, he was in fact communicating with undercover police officers in all three cases.

Watts was arrested and charged with three counts of attempting to engage in sexual communication with a child. He was also charged with one count of attempting to cause or incite a child under 13 to engage in sexual activity, and of breaching an existing sexual harm prevention order.

As a result of his new offending, Watts had a sexual harm prevention order brought into force. The Order was granted in 2015 following his conviction for three counts of possession of indecent photographs of children, with a view to their being distributed or shown by himself to others.

Watts initially pleaded not guilty to the latest charges but changed his plea on the first day of the trial. On 28 June 2021, he was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment at Leicester Crown Court.

Following the Court's decision, the Solicitor General referred Watts' case to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme. On 1 September 2021, the Court found his sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 6 years and 3 months' imprisonment.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP, said:

Watts' intentions were deeply disturbing and designed to harm young children. The seriousness of his offending had to reflect the gravity of his criminal intentions. I am pleased that the Court of Appeal saw fit to increase his sentence today.

This ruling follows the decision by the Court of Appeal that where a defendant sets out to sexually abuse a child, in circumstances where the child in fact is an adult posing as a child, then the starting point for sentencing should be set by reference to the harm that the defendant intended to cause the fictional child. The fact that there was no real child for the defendant to abuse will then be reflected in a downward movement from that starting point. The extent of that reduction will be a matter for the court

in individual cases to decide, but the seriousness of the offending must nonetheless be reflected in what the offender intended.

[Professor Jonathan Statham appointed AHWBE Chair](#)

Press release

Biosecurity Minister Lord Benyon has appointed Professor Jonathan Statham as the new Chair of the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England.



Professor Jonathan Statham

Professor Jonathan Statham has today (1 September) been appointed Chair of the [Animal Health and Welfare Board for England \(AHWBE\)](#). Professor Statham will start the role on 1 November 2021, replacing the current Chair, Michael Seals, who is standing down after ten years in the role.

I am delighted to have been appointed the next Chair of the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England.

As a large animal vet by profession, high animal health and welfare is close to my heart and something I know is very important to industry and wider society.

It is a crucial point in time for the industry and for us as a board, with lots of key policies coming forward which bring along many challenges. It is an enormous privilege for me to take on this role once Michael Seals steps down. I look forward to working

together with him and colleagues on the board.

Biosecurity Minister Lord Benyon said:

With extensive veterinary and farming experience, Jonathan will play a key role in improving the health and welfare of kept animals in England over the coming years.

We have bold plans to improve animal health and welfare, as outlined in our recently-published Action Plan for Animal Welfare, and I look forward to working closely with Jonathan and the AHWBE to deliver these ambitions.

I also want to thank Michael Seals for his dedication in leading the organisation over the past decade.

Outgoing AHWBE Chair Michael Seals said:

Jonathan will be an excellent new Chair and I am confident he will continue the great work of the board and bring new experiences to the role.

He has a long-standing passion for improving health and welfare in kept animals and experience in linking this knowledge to the environment and to the issues of the future.

We therefore have an incoming Chair who can take the work of the board and its advice to ministers to a new level, while supporting delivery through the forthcoming Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. I wish Jonathan every success as Chair.

Jonathan Statham biography:

- Jonathan has been a Non-Executive Director on the AHWBE since 2017.
- He is a qualified veterinarian and partner at the Bishopton Veterinary Group in Yorkshire and has years of experience of working with the farming industry.
- He is also Chief Executive Officer at RAFT Solutions Ltd and a Professor of Sustainable Livestock Health & Welfare at Harper and Keele Veterinary School.
- Previously, Jonathan has been President of the British Cattle Veterinary

Association and Yorkshire Veterinary Society. He has served on various representative and industry groups, including the GB Cattle Health and Welfare Group and Veterinary Policy Group of the British Veterinary Association.

About the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England:

- Launched in 2011, the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England is the principal source of advice to Defra ministers on all strategic health and welfare matters relating to kept animals in England.
- Its responsibilities include animal health and welfare policy, assessing the threat from animal diseases, and reviewing contingency plans for disease outbreaks.

Background

- Professor Statham's appointment follows fair and open competition in line with the governance code for public appointments.
- Professor Statham will start the role on 1 November. In the meantime, he will be working alongside the current Chair in his role as Chair-designate.
- The AHWBE board comprises four executive members and eight non-executive members, including the Chair.
- The Chair maintains close links to other animal health committees in Defra (such as the Animal Welfare Committee, the TB Partnership Group and the Farm Animal Genetic Resources Committee) to ensure sharing of information and direction of policy for all these groups.

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[Student Loans Company urges students in Wales to prepare for payment](#)

Press release

SLC is supporting students to get ready for the first student finance payment of the new academic year.



In the coming weeks the Student Loans Company (SLC) will distribute over £2 billion in Maintenance Loan funding to over 1 million students across the UK – supporting a record number of students to access opportunities in higher and further education.

With the new academic year almost ready to start, SLC is urging students in Wales to get ready for the first payment by following our top tips.

- **Make sure you've submitted your application and provided any evidence you have been asked for:**

Sign in to your online account and check your to-do list is complete. If your 'to-do list' isn't showing, this means you have no actions. Most evidence can be uploaded online, Please only provide evidence you are specifically asked for.

- **Prepare parents and partners too:**

Parents and partners may also be asked to provide financial information and evidence. They should do this through their own online student finance account which they can set up at www.studentfinancewales.co.uk. They don't need to upload any evidence, especially not P60s, unless we ask for it – otherwise it'll take longer to process your application if we receive information that's not required.

- **Check your bank details and National Insurance Number are correct in your online account:**

If you need to update your bank details, make sure you do this at least 4 days before your payment date. It's important that the details are correct to ensure your money goes to the right place.

- **Register on your course:**

Follow the registration guidance provided by your higher education provider and make sure you register as soon as possible. We cannot make payments to you until your university or college confirms that you've registered. It can take three to five days for payments to reach your

account once you are registered, so you should make sure you have money to cover any initial costs.

- **Remember if you are applying close to your term start date you may not get your full entitlement initially:**

It can take 6-8 weeks to process a student finance application, which means that applications may not be fully processed by term start. We may award you a Maintenance Loan and Grant that's not based on your household income to ensure you have money for the start of your course. We'll then process your household income details, and we'll adjust your Maintenance Loan and Grant entitlement. Once we process your household income details, the total amount you'll be paid will not change, but the ratio of Maintenance Loan and Grant might.

- **Check the status of your payments:**

You can view your payment schedule and check the status of your payments via your online account. You can find out what each of the payment statuses mean [online](#).

- **Let us know as soon as possible if you plan to suspend or withdraw from your studies:**

We hope it won't happen but if you have to leave or suspend your course it's important that you consider the impact on your funding. Talk to your university or college and let SLC know of any changes as soon as possible. Find out more [online](#).

- **Stay up-to-date with the latest student finance information:**

Follow Student Finance Wales on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels.

SLC's Executive Director of Operations, Chris Larmer, said: "SLC exists to enable students to invest in their futures through further and higher education. This year we have received a record number of student finance applications and are on track to ensure that more students than ever will have their funding in place at the start of term."

"We are urging students to play their part too and follow our tips to prepare for payment. To further help students we have also made a wide range of information and resources available online and on our social media channels covering the most common payment questions."

Broadland flood alleviation project reaches 20 year landmark

A host of environmental benefits and flood defences for towns and villages around the Norfolk Broads are the result of a 20 year project reaching its conclusion.

Almost 2,000 homes and business and vital transport links are now better protected from 3 local rivers thanks to a multi million pound scheme from the Environment Agency.

There are also improved facilities for anglers, boaters, walkers and the many others enjoying the Broads for business or pleasure.

The completion of piling works at Burgh Castle on the River Waveney marks the final phase of the £140 million Broadland Flood Alleviation Project.

This project has improved flood defences, maintenance and emergency response services in the tidal areas of the River Yare, River Bure and River Waveney.

The project's achievements include:

Improved flood protection – 1700 properties and 5 previously undefended communities are now better protected from flooding. Over 240 kilometres of flood banks have been upgraded and 36 kilometres of banks realigned inland. Major transport links such as the A47 and Norwich/Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft railway lines are also better protected.

Agriculture and land management – around 30,000 hectares of land are now at less risk of being breached by flood waters. This includes, 24,000 hectares of prime agricultural land and 28 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Over 3 kilometres of overhead electric cables were moved underground.

Angling, navigation and recreation – over 5 kilometres of public moorings and 5 slipways were upgraded, new angling platforms provided and 100 kilometres of public footpaths improved.

Greener flood defences – by removing previously constructed hard edges, 28 kilometres of soft reeded fringes were created. These 'green defences' have new flood banks further back than before to allow the restoration of a traditional Broadland reed fringe.

Carbon saving – reclaimed materials were utilised with some 7.5 kilometres of steel sheet and timber piles reused. Materials have also been processed and stockpiled for reuse at later dates.

Benefits to biodiversity – there was a 200 per cent increase in the number of nationally endangered water voles during the course of the project. The

thousands of biological records created by the project were passed to County Records Centres to contribute to the natural knowledge of the area.

Paul Mitchelmore, Environment Agency Project Manager, said:

This project has given us a unique opportunity to extend the life of these flood defences, and help to preserve the special qualities of the Broads. We now have a more sustainable flood defence system which will reduce the burden on future generations for its upkeep.

More than 1700 properties and 5 previously undefended communities are now better protected from flooding and 30,000 hectares of land is now at less risk of being breached by flood waters.

We have also been able to make improvements to public footpaths and several public boat moorings for the enjoyment of visitors.

Throughout the project we have actively engaged in developing close working partnerships with stakeholders to incorporate their views and opinions into our plans. Working closely with Jacobs and BAM Nuttall as Broadland Environmental Services Ltd (BESL) enabled us to provide a lasting solution to an area of unique value to the environment.

Donald Morrison, Jacobs People & Places Solutions Senior Vice President for Europe and Digital Strategies, said:

The Broadland Flood Alleviation Project will leave a significant legacy – safeguarding land and communities from flood, protecting local economic activity and providing an enhanced natural environment.

The project's success demonstrates that large scale improvement schemes with a strategic approach to improving existing flood defences can be accomplished within a nationally and internationally important wetland area.

The close collaboration within the core delivery team and stakeholder and landowner involvement in the detailed phases of public consultation has been central to the success of this project.

David McGowan, BAM Nuttall Business Excellence Officer, said:

Leading the development of innovative, sustainable solutions for rural flood protection schemes, this team maximised the use of material surrounding the work and minimised traffic through local communities. Repeating results along the 150 miles of defences, new

habitats have been created for a variety of species to thrive. And over two decades, the project has provided employment and opportunities to develop skills for more than 1,000 local people, leaving a lasting positive legacy for people living and working in Norfolk.

Future funding

As the effects of climate change increase, the Broads will continue to be eligible for potential funding through the National capital programme 2021 to 2027. This programme will see the government invest a record £5.2 billion in flood and coastal defences – double the previous investment – to better protect 336,000 properties.

The Environment Agency's [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#) will help prepare for more extreme weather and build a better prepared and more resilient nation.

Further information

The Broads (Broadland) is a wetland area of international importance in eastern Norfolk and north Suffolk. The Broadland grazing marshes, wetlands and fens all lie below current high tides. The riverside settlements face a future of higher sea levels. Economic activity in the Broads, whether it be through agriculture, local commerce, recreational boating, fishing or rambling is heavily dependent upon reliable flood defences.

Broadland is a 22,000 hectare area of broads in Norfolk and Suffolk, most of which is below sea level. It is economically valuable largely due to farming and recreation – in particular, water based activities such as boating, sailing and angling. The area also has important roads and railways, including those that link Norwich with Great Yarmouth

There was widespread flooding in 1953. Since the start of the project, tidal flood events have happened in November 2006, November 2007, December 2013 and October 2014. 1953 levels have been exceeded on at least 2 occasions. During these events there has been some overtopping but fewer breaches have occurred. A small number of riverside businesses and houses have flooded but flooding is usually confined to agricultural land.

Full list of key achievements:

Improved flood risk management

- Over 240 kilometres of flood banks upgraded, with over 36 kilometres of banks realigned inland
- 1700 properties and 5 previously undefended communities better protected from flooding
- Major transport links have also benefited including the A47 and Norwich-Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft railway lines.

Agriculture and land management

- 30,000 hectares of land protected from being breached by flood waters
- Including 24,000 hectares of prime agricultural land and 28 sites which are SSSI designated (Sites of Special Scientific Interest)
- Over 3 kilometres of overhead electric cables moved underground – improving the landscape and making the area safer for farmers and anglers.

Water

- 28km of hard, piled edges removed and replaced with soft reeded fringes. These ‘green defences’ are created by using a technique called setback – building a new flood bank further back and removing old piling next to the water to allow the restoration of a traditional Broadland reed fringe;
- This provides major landscape benefits as well as contributing to Water Framework Directive objectives. Angling, navigation and recreation
- 5.2 kilometres of public moorings and 5 slipways upgraded;
- New angling platforms provided;
- Setback areas provide 500,000 cubic metres of dredging disposal sites which create new areas for flood alleviation, habitat and recreation;
- 100 kilometres of public footpath improved, with over 5 kilometres surfaced for easy access. Delivered in partnerships with local authorities.

Environmental performance

- Use of reclaimed materials – some 7.5 kilometres of steel sheet and timber piles have been reused. Materials also have been processed and stockpiled for reuse at later dates;
- Almost zero waste created by reducing the amount of new materials required. Biodiversity
- 200 per cent increase in the number of nationally endangered water voles during the project;
- Creation of the largest temporary adder bank in the UK, some 300 metres long;
- Thousands of biological records created by the project now passed on to County Records centres to contribute to the natural knowledge of the area.

Public Private Partnership – Broadland Environmental Services Ltd

The 20 year project has been carried out as a Public Private Partnership Project for the Environment Agency. The contract was awarded in May 2001 to Jacobs and BAM Nuttall.

Under the agreement, Jacobs acted as consultant and BAM Nuttall as the contractor, working together in a joint venture as Broadland Environmental Services Ltd (BESL).

The programme’s main purpose was to provide a strategic approach to improving

the condition of flood protection in Broadland while engaging key stakeholders and the local community.

It included responsibility for design, consultation, strategy development, implementation and monitoring. By working in partnership, the project has provided a cost-effective, sustainable approach to flood defences based on strengthening existing flood banks and in some riverside villages, providing defences for the first time.

[Charity Commission concludes compliance case involving The Runnymede Trust](#)

[The Runnymede Trust](#) is a charitable think tank focused on race equality and race relations in the UK.

The regulator opened a case in April 2021 after receiving complaints about the charity's activity, including its response to the report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities ("the CRED report") and whether it was engaging in lawful political activity. As part of this, the Commission also examined whether the trustees acted in line with their duties and responsibilities in the way they made the decision to work with the Good Law Project to challenge certain public appointments.

The regulator's guidance makes clear that charities are permitted in law to campaign and undertake political activity, and to take up positions that not everyone agrees with, but that this must always be done in furtherance of a charity's purposes.

Following careful assessment of the concerns raised, the Commission says that it was within the charity's purposes to engage with and take a position on the CRED report and has found no breach of its guidance. It has welcomed the trustees' decision to strengthen the charity's internal policies and procedures on political activity, in line with the Commission's guidance on campaigning and political activity. It says such a review will help the trustees ensure that the charity demonstrates party political neutrality and actively promotes its independence.

The Commission has also determined that the trustees did not breach their legal duties and responsibilities when they made the decision to work with the Good Law Project.

As part of its case, the Commission examined issues relating to party political neutrality and noted the appearance of a senior executive of the Runnymede Trust at an event organised by a political party, alongside several

elected representatives and affiliated speakers. [The Commission's guidance](#) is clear that a charity can work with elected representatives, where doing so furthers its charitable purpose. But the Commission expects trustees to ensure that their charity's engagement with political parties and politicians is balanced so that they are not perceived to be supporting one party over another, in order to protect the Trust's independence and reputation. The trustees have given assurances that they endeavour to engage with a range of parties and political viewpoints.

Helen Earner, Director of Regulatory Services at the Charity Commission, said:

We take all concerns raised with us about charities seriously – whether they come from members of the public, parliamentarians, or the media. We treat all complaints with respect and assess them impartially and expertly against the legal framework. That is what the public expects.

In this case, we have found no breach of our guidance. However, we have told the trustees of the Runnymede Trust that they must ensure the charity's engagement with political parties and politicians is balanced.

It is not for us as regulator to tell trustees how best to further their charity's purposes. Charities are free to take up positions that are controversial, if the trustees come to a reasoned decision that doing so furthers the charity's cause.

But all charities must comply with the rules associated with charitable status. Being a charity comes with privileges, but also with important responsibilities. We expect the trustees and senior leaders of the Runnymede trust to pay heed to these responsibilities, as we expect all charities to.

The Charity Commission's case opened on 9 April 2021 and concluded on 17 August 2021.

[In a blog published in March](#), the Commission's CEO Helen Stephenson noted that "charities must be able to show that they are driven, not by the background, world view or political inclinations and interests of their leaders, but by their mission and purpose, and by the needs of the people or causes they serve."

Ends.

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.

2. It is not for the Commission to determine whether a charity's decision is 'right' or 'wrong', but whether the trustees acted in line with the law in making the decision. This includes examining whether the decision was in line with the charity's purposes, and whether the process of decision making by the trustees was in line with the law, [as explained in our guidance](#).