

Charity regulator opens statutory inquiry into The Aspinall Foundation

Press release

The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into The Aspinall Foundation over serious concerns about the charity's governance and financial management.



[The charity](#) promotes animal conservation and has objects to promote education in zoology and to conserve wild animals in danger of extinction.

The regulator began examining the charity in July 2020 over concerns about the management of conflicts of interest and related-party transactions.

It opened a regulatory compliance case and began engaging with the trustees regarding these concerns in November of last year, and the trustees have been fully co-operating with the Commission. Since that time, the regulator has identified further questions regarding the charity's governance, and it will now examine all these issues as part of a formal statutory inquiry.

The inquiry will examine:

- the administration, governance and management of the Charity by the trustees with specific regard to how conflicts of interest have been dealt with and managed
- whether or not there has been any unauthorised trustee benefit; and
- whether or not the trustees have complied with and fulfilled their duties and responsibilities under charity law

The regulator may extend the scope of the inquiry if additional regulatory issues emerge.

The opening of an inquiry is not a finding of wrongdoing.

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 are [available on GOV.UK](#).

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. The Commission has also today announced the opening of a separate statutory inquiry into [The Howletts Wild Animal Trust](#). The two charities have a number of trustees in common but are separate entities.

Published 31 March 2021

[Charity regulator launches statutory inquiry into The Howletts Wild Animal Trust](#)

Press release

The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into The Howletts Wild Animal Trust over serious concerns about the charity's governance and financial management.



[The charity](#) has objects to promote education in zoology, and the conservation of wildlife. It runs two wildlife parks in Kent.

The regulator began looking into the charity in December 2019 due to concerns about the charity's management of conflicts of interest and a related-party transaction. The trustees have co-operated fully with the Commission since it first engaged with them last year.

The Commission still has concerns about related party transactions, meaning that it is now necessary to examine these issues as part of a formal statutory inquiry. The inquiry will further examine the concerns identified at the charity, including:

- the administration, governance and management of the Charity by the trustees with specific regard to how conflicts of interest have been dealt with and managed and the charity's management of related party transactions; and
- whether or not the trustees have complied with and fulfilled their duties and responsibilities under charity law

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The opening of an inquiry is not a finding of wrongdoing. 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.

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Published 31 March 2021

[Customers reminded of fast-track service](#)

News story

HM Land Registry's free fast-track service ensures property sales can proceed smoothly.



Anyone involved in selling or buying property, including members of the public or their conveyancers, can ask HM Land Registry to expedite (fast-track) an outstanding application.

Our fast-track service allows customers to ask for urgent applications, which are necessary for transactions to be completed, to be processed within 10 working days. Our improved [Request an expedite](#) guide makes the process simpler and clearer for the public and conveyancers. There is no extra charge to use the fast-track service.

Simon Hayes, Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar, said:

HM Land Registry is committed to ensure no property sale is put at risk – we have always prioritised the delivery of services that enable property sales to be completed. Most of our searches are instant and most changes come at the end of the transaction. However, sometimes changes are needed urgently, and our fast track service means that anyone who has a concern about delays can contact their solicitor or contact us directly so we can investigate and resolve any problems quickly for them.

Our blog [Where is my HM Land Registry application](#) explains how customers can search and request to change the Land Register.

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[Newcastle rapist jailed for longer](#)

News story

Kenneth Gent has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Attorney General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP



A teenager who raped another young adult has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Attorney General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Kenneth Gent, 19, was aged 16 when he raped an 18-year old girl after offering to accompany her on her way home. Following the rape, police identified him via CCTV and arrested him the same night.

Gent has 8 previous convictions, including for violent offences.

After being convicted of two counts of rape, Gent was sentenced to 3 years' detention in a young offenders institution on 22 January 2021 at Newcastle Crown Court.

Following a referral to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme, on 31 March the Court found the sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 4 years and 6 months' detention with 3-year extended licence.

Speaking after the hearing, the Attorney General, the Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP said:

Gent carried out a shocking attack, ignoring all cries to stop. In my view his sentence was too lenient, and I am glad that the Court saw fit to increase it today. I hope this brings some comfort to the young victim.

Published 31 March 2021

[Summit to help those most vulnerable fight climate change](#)

Opening speech

Friends, a very warm welcome to the COP26 Climate and Development Ministerial.

I am so pleased that so many of you are with us. At what is one of the most important events we are hosting in the run up to COP26.

We know the problems we are addressing today are not new.

We have heard time and again that a lack of solutions on finance, adaptation and debt are limiting climate action in the world's most vulnerable communities.

But it is absolutely vital that we now break the inertia and find some solutions.

It's important That the international community collectively delivers.

And that is why we are here today.

Between us here today, we hold the solutions to the problems we are looking to address.

If we are determined to work together to resolve them, we will.

Communities most vulnerable to climate change understand the challenges better than anyone.

And are leaders when it comes to climate action.

I have been travelling over the past few weeks and seen this in my visits to Kenya, Costa Rica, Nepal, India, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Gabon.

Financial institutions and developed countries have the tools to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable to climate change.

Indeed, we have a responsibility to do so.

Because we know that communities that have done the least to cause the climate crisis are suffering the most.

So, I hope that you have come armed with practical steps that you will take in the run up to COP26, to solve these challenges. And help to ensure the green recovery from Covid-19 is truly global.

We all need to be totally focused on setting out these practical steps.

Let me give you an example .

Voluntary Carbon Markets can increase finance flows and I am pleased the UK Government is supporting the Voluntary Carbon Market Integrity Initiative to help ensure they deliver the greatest benefits for climate, for people and

nature.

We also know there is a tangible ask from developing countries for a rebalancing of climate finance flows between mitigation and adaptation.

We cannot continue with a situation where adaptation is the poor cousin of mitigation.

You will have heard the UN Secretary General calling for a 50:50 split. All donor countries must consider what they can do to materially increase adaptation finance flows .

Alongside the Chair's Summary of this meeting, we will publish a Pathway, setting out how and when we will follow-up on each of the actions we agree today.

I am grateful to all countries and institutions who joined the roundtables ahead of today's Ministerial.

And to the academics and representatives from civil society representatives who have joined the workshops and made a critical difference in the shaping of this discussion.

The findings of these pre-meetings will inform our discussions.

Of course, many of the issues on the agenda today also relate to our negotiations in Glasgow.

To make these a success, we need to get conversations going ahead of COP26 and look for shared solutions.

So to kick us off today, let me offer some examples of how the COP26 Presidency will get discussions moving in the formal process.

To make progress on finance, we will bring together technical experts in April, and Heads of Delegations in May.

This will happen ahead of Ministers meeting at the Petersberg Dialogue. Followed by a meeting of Ministers later in the year hosted by the Presidency.

On the Global Goal for Adaptation, the UK COP26 Presidency will host three events, with the first of those in May

And we will hold three consultations before November on the Santiago Network for Loss & Damage. With the first next month.

Our very clear aim is to get the network operational by COP26.

I hope that you and your teams will join us for these events so the negotiations in Glasgow has the best chance of success.

When it comes to today I would like us to speak freely and frankly and offer practical solutions to move things forward.

We can make real progress if we do this.

We will get the discussions going very shortly, but first, let's hear from some of the people who matter most in these conversations.

We know that women, indigenous peoples and younger generations are often impacted the most by climate change. And that they also hold some of the most effective solutions.

So it is my absolute pleasure to introduce young leader, and CEO of The Mongolian Sustainable Finance Association, Nomindari Enkhtur.

Closing speech

Friends, we have reached the end of the COP26 Climate and Development Ministerial meeting.

I want to thank you all for joining us today.

And for such constructive discussions, and solid commitments.

The problems we have discussed in this meeting have been articulated many times before.

But today, we have made real progress on what we can do to solve them.

We heard the practical steps that will be taken to do so.

International institutions and developed countries have given new clarity on the action they will take.

Whether at the Earth Day Summit, the Petersberg Dialogue, the G7, the G20, or development bank annual meetings on the road to COP26.

In this morning's session we heard strong calls for a high-level and time bound Task Force to address access to finance issues.

I am pleased to say the UK will work with Fiji and other countries to initiate the Aligning Finance with Ambition Taskforce, with a view to presenting a concept note by the Petersberg Dialogue.

We also heard calls for commitments to fulfil the \$100bn and increase adaptation finance.

I am pleased that the Foreign Secretary Dominic Rabb will prioritise this at the G7 to bolster global disaster risk reduction and response.

Fulfilling the \$100billion commitment is vital. A matter of trust for developing countries, as we have heard today. A floor and not a ceiling.

We can no longer look at climate change in isolation, it is an issue that encompasses the whole economy. And there has been strong progress on the consensus to deliver a new allocation of SDRs.

We also heard about the crucial role of the private sector, as a creditor, and as an investor, where grant-based public finance can unlock large sums of private finance.

And I am pleased the IMF and World Bank have committed to continue the urgent discussions around debt, fiscal space and climate action.

Together, the sum of the commitments we have heard today, should help us forge a new era of partnership ahead of COP26.

An era that supports a truly global green and resilient recovery from Covid-19.

I am grateful for the spirit of cooperation we have seen. And the real, tangible desire to find answers.

I hope that these discussions have given confidence to our friends from the countries and communities most vulnerable to climate change.

I can assure you that I will be absolutely focussed on putting the results of our meeting today into effect.

Alongside the Chair's Summary of the meeting, we will publish a Pathway, setting out how and when we will follow-up on each of the actions we have agreed.

I am also focussed on laying the foundation for successful negotiations at Glasgow, which touch on many of the issues we have discussed today.

That means getting discussions going ahead of COP26.

So that when we arrive in Glasgow, we are ready to resolve the issues and negotiate a balanced outcome.

Let me offer some examples of how we intend to get discussions moving ahead of COP26.

To make concrete progress on finance, we will bring together technical experts in April, and Heads of Delegations in May.

This will happen ahead of Ministers meeting at the Petersberg Dialogue.

We will follow this up with a meeting of Ministers later in the year, hosted by the Presidency.

On the Global Goal for Adaptation, the UK COP26 Presidency will host three events, the first in May.

And we will hold three consultations before November on the Santiago Network for Loss & Damage. With the first one of these in April.

Our clear aim will be to get the Network operationalised by COP26.

I hope that you and your teams join us for these events, so that we give the

Glasgow negotiations the best chance of success.

The outcomes we have agreed are an essential contribution to this work.

And have potential to break the inertia, and finally resolve some of the issues we have discussed.

So thank you again for your contributions today.

And I look forward to working with all of you in the run up to COP26.

To deliver on what we have promised.

To put our shared plans into action.

And, together, we help to move the world towards a clean, safer, and more prosperous future.

Thank you.