

Fraudulent art investment companies wound up by courts

Wardells Design Limited and Camp Partners Limited were wound up in the public interest on 4 December in the High Court, Manchester, before District Judge Bever. The Official Receiver has been appointed liquidator of the companies.

The two companies came to the attention of the Insolvency Service in connection with previous investigations into associated companies, Halifax Mannin Ltd, Hey Design Services Ltd, Gem Tobin Ltd and Dionysus Design Services Ltd. All of the associated companies were wound up in the public interest in 2019 having [abused investors' funds of almost £2.5million](#).

Following confidential enquiries, investigators found that Wardells Design, based in Warrington, and Camp Partners, based in Ipswich, received payments from people who thought they were investing in works of art painted by renowned artists.

The court heard that similar to the companies wound up in 2019, Wardells Design and Camp Partners worked as part of a multi-million pound art investment scheme operated from Spain or Morocco by a separate business using a number of names.

Between March 2019 and February 2020, Wardells Design and Camp Partners received £600,000 from investors. All of the funds were removed from the companies' bank accounts with investigators unable to determine how it was spent.

The court wound up the two companies on the grounds they traded with a lack of commercial probity, having been incorporated or used as vehicles for fraud with their sole purpose being to receive monies wrongly obtained as investments from members of the public.

The court also accepted that the companies, and those individuals in control of them, traded with a lack of transparency, failed to cooperate with the investigation and failed to maintain or deliver up accounting records.

David Hope, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

These companies were used as part of a cynical scam targeting members of the public, many of whom were elderly and vulnerable, and took more than £600,000 from them. There is no evidence that this investment had any value or is likely to generate any return for investors.

The winding up of these companies following our investigation has put a stop to these activities and prevents them from causing any further harm. We would advise anyone considering an investment of this nature to exercise caution and take independent financial

advice before doing so.

All public enquiries concerning these companies should be sent to: The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 2nd Floor, 3 Piccadilly Place, London Road, Manchester, M1 3BN or email piu.north@insolvency.gov.uk.

Wardells Design Limited – company registration number 11863119 – was incorporated on 6 March 2019. The company's registered office is at 31 School Road, Warrington WA2 9AD.

Camp Partners Limited – company registration number 11880728 – was incorporated on 13 March 2019. The company's registered office is at 32 Creeting Road West, Stowmarket, England, IP14 5AU.

The business was operating from Spain under the names Asset Consulting Services, Asset Consulting Group or Treasury Consulting Group.

The petitions were presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 on 2 October 2020.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Further information about live company investigations is available here.](#)

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Road to Zero in sight as green number plates introduced on UK roads](#)

- green number plates get the green light as the UK accelerates towards a zero-emission future
- initiative could unlock cheaper parking and free entry into zero-emission zones, helping pave the way for cleaner air in our towns and cities
- plates will be identifiable by a green flash on the left-hand side, raising awareness of cleaner vehicles on our roads

Green number plates will be seen on roads for the first time from today, (8 December 2020) Transport Minister Rachel Maclean has announced, as the country prepares to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles as part of

our commitment to reach net-zero by 2050.

The Transport Minister added that the move underlined the government's commitment to tackling poor air quality in the UK's towns and cities. It builds on last month's announcement to [end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans in the UK by 2030](#), putting the UK on course to be the fastest G7 country to decarbonise these vehicles.

The introduction of the new plates on UK roads will raise awareness of the growing number of zero-emission vehicles, as well as helping motorists benefit from local initiatives such as cheaper parking and cost-free entry into zero-emission zones.

[Green number plates video](#)

Transport Minister Rachel Maclean said:

We are going further and faster than any other major economy to decarbonise transport, improving air quality in our towns and cities in the process and harnessing the power of clean, green technology to end the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050.

Not only will green number plates raise awareness of the increasing number of cleaner vehicles on our roads, they could also unlock a number of incentives for drivers. It's clear there has never been a better time to make the switch to a zero-emission vehicle.

The new number plates can be retro-fitted to any existing vehicles, including cars, vans, buses, HGVs, taxis and motorcycles as long as they emit no CO₂ emissions at the tailpipe. They will consist of a green flash on the left-hand side of the plate and can be combined with the Union flag and national identifiers already permitted by the regulations.

The move follows the conclusion of a consultation, inviting comments from the public, local authorities and industry stakeholders from a range of sectors including motoring and consumer groups and vehicle manufacturers, on how best to introduce green number plates.

The introduction of the new plates follows the first-ever meeting of ministers from the world's largest car markets last month, to form a new Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council. Hosted by the Business Secretary and the Transport Secretary, the council aims to help accelerate the pace of the global transition, with further council meetings to take place in 2021, including at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (also known as COP26).

As host of COP26, the UK is leading the way to double the pace of the global transition to a greener future, working with international partners, governments, industry, businesses and civil society to make the transition to zero-emission vehicles easier, cheaper and faster for all.

To align with the government's net-zero ambitions, last month the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) which is the government unit responsible for overseeing the transition to zero-emission cars and vans, was renamed to The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV).

Government's Vaccines Taskforce has worked "decisively" and at "great pace" to improve UK's pandemic preparedness

- Report on Taskforce's vaccines strategy, goals and achievements published, highlighting foundations for future pandemic preparedness
- rapid access to 357 million doses of most promising vaccines and UK's vaccine manufacturing capability transformed
- more than 360,000 volunteers joined NHS Vaccines Research Registry to take part in clinical trials supporting the search for a vaccine

The government has today (Tuesday 8 December) published a [report highlighting the work and achievements of its Vaccines Taskforce \(VTF\)](#), 6 months after it was set up to help in the fight against COVID-19.

The independent review by Sir Richard Sykes, chair of the Royal Institution and former chair Imperial College Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, found the VTF acted decisively and at great pace in the face of the pandemic, to secure access to 357 million doses of the most promising COVID-19 vaccines for the UK.

The report found the successes of the VTF have been achieved through the expertise of its members, who operated with agility to put the UK ahead at the forefront of global efforts to tackle COVID-19. Key successes include the creation of the world's first citizen registry of over 360,000 volunteers able to rapidly join vaccine trials, the pioneering of human challenge studies to accelerate future vaccine development and strategic investment to enhance the UK's vaccine research and manufacturing infrastructure, including flexible manufacturing capability at sites at Harwell, Braintree and Livingston.

Marking the publication of a report into work of the Vaccines Taskforce in the 6 months since it was set up, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use in the UK marks a momentous step in our fight against COVID-19.

I am hugely grateful for the hard work and dedication of the Vaccine Taskforce, under Kate Bingham's leadership, which has brought us to this point in challenging circumstances, representing the best the government and civil service can do – working with businesses, experts and the public to tackle a common problem at incredible pace. The country owes them a debt of gratitude.

But we still have some way to go and everyone needs to keep following the rules to keep the virus under control.

The VTF was established in April 2020 by the government's Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir Patrick Vallance, to drive forward, expedite and co-ordinate efforts to ensure the UK population would have access to a clinically safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19. Kate Bingham was appointed in May 2020 as Chair of the VTF, reporting directly to the Prime Minister and working under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

In addition to securing access to vaccines, the VTF set out to establish a long-term vaccine strategy to prepare the UK for future pandemics and work with partners to support equitable access to vaccines for people worldwide, whether rich or poor.

Business Secretary, Alok Sharma said:

Our Vaccine Taskforce has undoubtedly risen to the challenge to build a diverse portfolio of promising vaccine candidates to give the UK the greatest chance of finding one that works.

Thanks to Kate Bingham and her team, we were the first country to sign a deal with Pfizer/BioNTech, have secured more doses per head of population than almost any other country, and built a vaccine manufacturing base from scratch to strengthen our resilience to respond to COVID-19 and to future pandemics.

The Taskforce's impressive record has only been possible by bringing together business, science, industry expertise and the civil service to ensure the British public get access to a safe and effective vaccine as soon as possible. Our country owes every single person involved in this national effort a huge debt of gratitude.

The outgoing chair of the Vaccines Taskforce, Kate Bingham said:

Thanks to the mandate we were given by the Prime Minister, the Taskforce was able to rapidly strike deals for promising vaccines. Our aim was to ensure that the search for COVID-19 vaccines yielded positive results for the UK and the world. In doing so, we have cemented the UK's global leadership in vaccine research,

established much stronger manufacturing capability and clinical development capacity, ensuring we are much better prepared if, and when future pandemics arise.

I am delighted that the skill and nimbleness of the Taskforce has enabled us to secure millions of doses of the first vaccine conditionally approved by the MHRA and that the British public are now starting to be protected with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Kate Bingham's tenure as chair of the Vaccines Taskforce is due to conclude this month, as agreed when she was appointed earlier this year. Clive Dix, current deputy chair, will step into the role of interim chair of the VTF following her departure.

The interim chair of the Vaccines Taskforce, Clive Dix said:

The UK is now prepared to start dealing with COVID-19 with the first vaccines to prevent the disease. Although this is a huge success, there is more for us to do. We must continue to develop our research and response capabilities in the UK and finish the task of building an infrastructure to enable us to manufacture vaccines at scale.

In less than 6 months, the VTF has built a portfolio of 7 different vaccines from more than 240 vaccines in development across 4 different formats: adenoviral vectors, mRNA, adjuvanted proteins, and whole inactivated viral vaccines. This includes 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, 100 million doses of the Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccine and 7 million doses of the Moderna vaccine.

Internationally, the UK has committed to ensuring that everyone at risk of coronavirus, anywhere in the world, has access to a safe and effective vaccine. To do this, the UK has committed up to £548 million to the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (Covax). It will deliver vaccines for the UK population and provide access to vaccines for lower income countries.

Read the [independent interim report](#).

About the Vaccines Taskforce

The [Vaccines Taskforce \(VTF\)](#) was set up under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in May 2020, to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible, while working with partners to support international access to successful vaccines. This is to place the UK at the forefront of global vaccine research, development, manufacture and distribution.

The Vaccines Taskforce comprises a dedicated team of private sector industry professionals and officials from across government who are working at speed to build a portfolio of promising vaccine candidates that can end the global

pandemic. It is chaired by biotech and life sciences expert Kate Bingham, who was appointed by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The Vaccines Taskforce's approach to securing access to vaccines is through:

- procuring the rights to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates to spread risk and optimise chances for success
- providing funding for clinical studies, diagnostic monitoring and regulatory support to rapidly evaluate vaccines for safety and efficacy
- providing funding and support for manufacturing scale-up and fill and finish at risk so that the UK has vaccines produced at scale and ready for administration should any of these prove successful

The 4 different vaccine classes that the government has secured to date for the UK are:

- adenoviral vaccines (Oxford/AstraZeneca, Janssen)
- mRNA vaccines (BioNTech/Pfizer, Moderna)
- inactivated whole virus vaccines (Valneva)
- protein adjuvant vaccines (GSK/Sanofi, Novavax)

Once approved by regulators, vaccines would first be given to priority groups such as frontline health and social care workers, the elderly and adults with underlying health conditions.

[Government launches review to ensure gambling laws are fit for digital age](#)

- National Lottery minimum age raised to 18 to protect young people
- Online stake limits, gambling advertising and age limits to be considered
- Gambling Commission's role and powers will also be looked at

Online restrictions, marketing and the powers of the Gambling Commission will be looked at as part of a call for evidence, to examine in detail how gambling has changed over the past 15 years.

Protections for online gamblers like stake and spend limits, advertising and promotional offers and whether extra protections for young adults are needed will all be explored.

The findings will be used to inform any changes to the Gambling Act 2005 to ensure customer protection is at the heart of the regulations, while giving those that gamble safely the freedom to do so.

The review will also look at evidence on the action customers can take where they feel operators have breached social responsibility requirements, such as

intervening to protect customers showing clear signs of problematic play, and how to ensure children and young people are kept safe from gambling-related harm.

The Government recognises the need to balance the enjoyment people get from gambling with the right regulatory framework and protections.

It has also been announced today that the minimum age for playing the National Lottery will be raised from 16 to 18 from October 2021.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden, said:

“Whilst millions gamble responsibly, the Gambling Act is an analogue law in a digital age. From an era of having a flutter in a high street bookmaker, casino, racecourse or seaside pier, the industry has evolved at breakneck speed.

“This comprehensive review will ensure we are tackling problem gambling in all its forms to protect children and vulnerable people. It will also help those who enjoy placing a bet to do so safely.

“This builds upon our clear track record of introducing tough measures to protect people from the risk of gambling harm – banning the use of credit cards, launching tighter age verification checks and cutting the maximum stake on fixed odds betting terminals.”

Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage Nigel Huddleston said:

“We’re committed to protecting young people from gambling related harm which is why we are raising the minimum age for the National Lottery. Patterns of play have changed since its inception, with a shift towards online games, and this change will help make sure the National Lottery, although already low-risk, is not a gateway to problem gambling.”

It follows a range of measures recently introduced by the Government to protect consumers from the risk of gambling-related harm. These include cutting the maximum stake on fixed odds betting terminals, bringing in tighter age and identity checks for online gambling, banning gambling using credit cards and expanding national specialist support through the NHS Long Term Plan.

In September the Government launched a call for evidence to explore young people’s experiences of loot boxes in video games. This will provide a clearer picture of the size of the loot box market in the UK and fully examine any evidence of harms or links to problem gambling.

The review of the Gambling Act 2005 will also consider the Gambling Commission’s powers and resources to ensure it can keep pace with the licensed sector and tackle the black market.

In October the Gambling Commission introduced new rules on VIP schemes, and has called for evidence around how to ensure operators identify and intervene

where people are at risk of harm, including through carrying out affordability checks. The Commission will also soon set out new rules on safer game design for online slots and withdrawing winnings.

Alongside the launch of the review, the Government is announcing its decision to raise the minimum age to play the National Lottery from 16 to 18, to protect young people from gambling related harm.

Since it began in 1994 the National Lottery's games portfolio has changed significantly and there has been a growing trend towards online play and instant win games like scratchcards. Following a consultation, from October 2021 it will be illegal to sell all National Lottery products to under 18s.

The Government is working with the Gambling Commission and Camelot to roll out the new age limit across the National Lottery products as quickly as possible and to ensure that it is in place by October. Under current plans, online sales to 16 and 17 year olds will stop in April 2021.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The call for evidence will run for 16 weeks and will close on 31 March 2021.

Changes around the National Lottery minimum age will be brought into effect by October 2021 at the latest.

The Government has also published its response to the House of Lords Select Committee report on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry.

The first three of up to 14 new specialist clinics are open as part of the NHS Long-Term Plan to expand the geographical coverage of NHS services for people who experience serious gambling problems. A dedicated children and young person's service operates out of the National Problem Gambling Clinic in London.

The Department for Health and Social Care is working with the NHS and GambleAware to ensure best use of all available funding, and to align and integrate the expansion of treatment services across the system so patients get the right treatment at the right time.

Vulnerable families to benefit from additional package of support

Vulnerable families will benefit from a multi-million pound investment in programmes aimed at reaching 'hidden' children and the creation of a national centre to improve early education and health services.

In a speech today [Tuesday 8 December] at the Early Intervention Foundation's National Conference, Children's Minister Vicky Ford will announce an investment of almost £4.4 million to extend Covid-19 response programmes run by major children's charities, as well as setting out plans to create a National Centre for Family Hubs that will improve families' access to vital services across the country.

An extra £4.2 million will go to a coalition of charities to continue the 'See, Hear, Respond' programme until March 2021, supporting vulnerable children who fall below the threshold for statutory support and early help, including those in need of crisis support due to the pandemic.

Since its launch in June the partnership, which is made up of national children's charities as well as community-based organisations, has reached more than 39,000 vulnerable or 'hidden' children whose usual support networks of friends, extended family or out-of-school activities have been impacted by national and local pandemic restrictions.

This additional funding will reach an estimated 15,000 more children and young people, as well as 11,000 parents and carers in need of extra help.

Recognising the need to improve the long-term support for vulnerable families, the Children's Minister will also announce plans to launch the procurement process for a new National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Services, to support areas and councils set up new family hubs.

This builds on the Government's manifesto commitment to champion these hubs and better serve vulnerable families with integrated health and education services. The new centre will draw on existing good practice among councils, where hubs often operate an 'open door' approach and families can be referred for extra help by a range of professional services, including midwives, health visitors, GPs, schools or social services.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

This pandemic has caused unparalleled challenges for us as a country, but it has been particularly difficult for many vulnerable families who need the most support. This funding will expand the vital service provided by the See, Hear, Respond partnership, which has already helped find and protect 39,000 children who may otherwise have remained 'invisible' without it.

We must go further, not just tackling the most urgent and immediate issues but also looking at our vision for the future by improving the resources that already exist. We promised to champion family hubs and the plans set out today will help make sure even more families and children can access the early health and education services we know can have a lifelong impact.

The Minister will also confirm a further £190,000 for the NSPCC's helpline which provides advice to adults who have concerns about the welfare of a child.

Minister Ford will also announce an evaluation innovation fund, inviting suppliers to work alongside family hubs to design and deliver robust evaluations of their effectiveness and value for money. This will help national and local organisations understand which models work most effectively and can be replicated, as well as the best way to integrate a range of family services.

The package builds on confirmation in November's Spending Review of an additional £24 million investment in 2021-22 to expand capacity within secure children's homes, as well as £165 million funding for the Government's Troubled Families programme. This is in addition to the initial Covid response to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children, including:

- £160 million to support remote education and access to online social care via laptops, tablets and 4G routers;
- £350m for the National Tutoring Programme to help the most disadvantaged children catch up from time missed of their education; and
- £7.6m for the Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief fund which supported national charities who provide critical frontline services in England and Wales affected by the pandemic and who are experiencing immediate financial hardship.