

Regulator sanctions poverty relief charity over conflicts of interest failures involving company linked to ambassador

A Charity Commission inquiry has strongly criticised a poverty relief charity after its founding trustees failed to manage conflicts of interest arising from its relationship with a company linked to its ambassador, Canon Andrew White, and unauthorised payments were made to a trustee.

A legal Order has been handed down to the trustees of Hampshire-based CAWRM, where founding trustees have been found responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement.

An [inquiry was opened into CAWRM](#) in 2018 following a compliance visit which uncovered a number of serious governance concerns.

Conflicts of interest

Investigators found that the charity paid the company, Ace White Gold Ltd, over £14,000 to provide PAYE services. Ace White Gold was set up to trade in commodities and was connected to all of the charity's founding trustees in some way.

The founding trustees did not have a written agreement in place and no legal advice was sought around the service agreement with the company. An interim manager who was appointed by the Commission to review the relationship between the charity and Ace White Gold concluded that the agreement was not in the best interests of the charity.

Financial concerns

The inquiry found that the founding trustees had held charitable funds in Canon White's personal bank account for a period while the charity was unable to open a bank account. No safeguards were in place to ringfence the charitable funds from his personal money. This failing led to the ambassador owing the charity money but due to inadequate record-keeping the founding trustees were unable to confirm how much.

Investigators also found that books written by Canon White, and funded by the charity, were sold and promoted at events he attended as ambassador. Whilst the trustees understood that Canon White would donate funds raised from the book sales to the charity, they did not have a written agreement in place for this and the inquiry has not seen evidence that any funds were donated.

One founding trustee also received unauthorised payments of over £15,000 for providing services to the charity. The individual resigned as soon as they became aware that this was unauthorised.

Significant sums were found to have been spent on overseas consultants and a school in Jordan, without clarity of what this was for. The inquiry found that these arrangements predated the creation of the charity and were set up by Canon White.

Among other serious concerns about financial management, the inquiry found that the charity had transported around £42,000 in cash out of the UK during trips to Jordan and/or Israel in 2018. The Commission has previously [warned against the practice of cash couriering](#). Investigators issued an Order to restrict the use of this practice, which trustees have since complied with.

The inquiry concluded that the founding trustees had not considered or managed the personal benefit to Canon White and did not always act independently of him, as was their legal duty. An ambassador is not a formal role in the governance of a charity, and it is the trustees that should hold overall management, responsibility and control of a charity.

To address the failings and the shortfalls in the charity's governance and management, the inquiry served the trustees with an Order under section 84 of the Charities Act.

This requires action to strengthen the charity's governance such as by introducing personal benefit and conflict of interest policies. It also requires the current trustees to consider the recovery of any personal benefit to the ambassador and the unauthorised salary payments made to one of the founding trustees.

The current trustees have made some progress on the inquiry's concerns already, implementing safeguarding and GDPR policies. The regulator will follow up with the charity to assess the current trustees' compliance with the Order.

Tim Hopkins, Assistant Director of Investigations and Inquiries at the Charity Commission said:

This case is a reminder that good governance is more than a bureaucratic detail. It should serve as a lesson for all charities in the importance of strong independent boards that protect and steer their charity towards furthering its purpose, in the interests of those it is set up to help. The role of an ambassador should be to support a charity and help it thrive.

Our inquiry exposed a number of inappropriate arrangements and transactions which were overseen or permitted by the former trustees – including failures to manage the charity's relationship with its ambassador, identify and manage conflicts of interest, and prevent private benefit. We will monitor the trustees' compliance with our Order to ensure that the changes we need to see are made.

Read the [full report of the Commission's inquiry into CAWRM](#).

Ends.

Notes to editors:

1. As of 31 July 2020 Canon Andrew White is disqualified from acting as a trustee and/or holding any office or employment with a senior management function in all charities for a period of 12 years. This action relates to his conduct in another charity.
2. View [CAWRM's entry on the register of charities for further information about the charity.](#)
3. The Charity Commission is the registrar and regulator of 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. The Commission is an independent, non-ministerial government department.

£5 billion in student finance paid so far this term

News story

A blog from Derek Ross Executive Director, Operations at the Student Loans Company makes the first tuition fee payment of the academic year



This week marks another major student finance milestone. On 21 October, we paid £2.3 billion in tuition fees to higher and further education providers, on behalf of over one million students. As of this week we have also paid more than £2.7 billion in maintenance payments to over a million students, taking the total amount of student finance paid so far this term to £5 billion.

We will also make a second tranche of tuition fee payments on 28 October to facilitate the re-profiling of fee payments announced by Government this year. This second payment essentially gives universities an 'advance' on the second instalment of tuition fees; but, importantly, students don't become

liable for these fees until the normal second liability point.

While the vast majority of student finance applications for this academic year are now processed and paid, we are still working through late applications and applications for additional types of support, such as grants for dependants. We are also still receiving new student finance applications every day – in fact, we are receiving more late student finance applications this year than we ever have before, meaning we are even busier than we normally would be at this time of year.

Student finance applications can be submitted up to nine months after the start of the academic year, but if you are applying late you should be aware it may take us up to six weeks to process your application, or possibly longer if there are unusual or complex circumstances. If you are eligible, we will pay you the basic rate of maintenance loan as soon as we can, so you have some funding in place while we finalise your entitlement. To ensure your application is processed as quickly as possible, please respond to our requests for additional information as soon as you can.

SLC exists to enable people to invest in their futures through further and higher education by providing trusted, transparent, flexible and accessible student finance services; and it's looking increasingly likely that this academic year, we will be providing those student finance services to more students than ever before.

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Businesses trading timber urged to prepare for change

Businesses trading timber between Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI) are being urged by the UK Government to take action to ensure they are prepared for the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020.

The government has confirmed:

- Due diligence checks will take place on timber flowing from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.
- Due diligence checks will take place on timber flowing from the European Union (EU) to GB and GB to EU.
- No new due diligence checks will take place on timber flowing from NI to GB.
- No new due diligence checks will take place on timber flowing from the EU to NI.

There will be no changes to the current process for businesses importing from outside of the EU and UK producers first placing timber on the internal market – they will still need to carry out due diligence as before.

To comply with their obligations, timber traders will be required to tell the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS):

- who they bought the timber from;
- who they sold it to (regardless of species, product or country of origin), through evidence such as an invoice; and,
- both traders and operators (importers) will be required to keep records for five years.

In the same way as they do now, operators are required to exercise due diligence to ensure that timber and timber products have not been illegally harvested.

The changes will be relevant to a range of businesses who use timber, including importers and operators, exporters, those working in the construction industry, furniture manufacturers, paper and pulp manufactures, and the forestry industry.

There will be no change to the way timber due diligence requirements are enforced. However, failure to comply with the timber regulations and enforcement ranges from warning letters, through to court cases, to an unlimited fine and up to two years in prison.

Importers of timber from third countries already have to carry out due diligence, except if they are importing from a country which has an operational Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) in place and that import is covered by [a forest law enforcement, governance and trade \(FLEGT\) licence](#).

From 1 January 2021, the European Timber Regulation (EUTR) and FLEGT will become UK domestic legislation as the UK Timber Regulations and FLEGT. The requirements under the UK Regulations remain the same as under EUTR.

Free guidance and tools are available on the [OPSS website](#) and [on GOV.UK](#).

The new free-to-use Trader Support Service will provide support and guidance to businesses moving goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol. Businesses who [sign up to the Trader Support Service](#) will be guided through the new processes under the Northern Ireland Protocol and can also use it to complete digital declarations.

[2022 Commonwealth Games: Games](#)

[Transport Plan](#)

The 2022 Commonwealth Games, held in Birmingham, will be the biggest sporting and cultural event that the city and the region have ever seen. With an estimated television audience of 1.5 billion people, it will showcase Birmingham, the West Midlands and the entire country as an amazing place to live, work, study, visit and do business.

Effective transport helps local communities and supports local economies. We are investing in transport across the region including over £320 million of [Transforming Cities Fund funding](#) to support local transport projects in the West Midlands.

We know that putting in place effective transport provision is a crucial part of any major sporting event and requires detailed planning and coordination. A well understood and supported Transport Plan is therefore essential.

The [Birmingham Commonwealth Games Act 2020](#), which received Royal Assent on 25 June, includes a number of transport measures and places the Games Transport Plan on a statutory footing, awarding it appropriate weight and authority.

Today, I am delighted to inform the House that, in line with s.25(1) of the Act, I have directed the West Midlands Combined Authority to prepare a Games Transport Plan for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The Games will be delivered in a much shorter time than other Games: in just 4.5 years, rather than the typical 7. Local partners in Birmingham and the West Midlands are already leading the transport preparations for the Games.

The Games Transport Plan is an integral measure, which will set out a strategic approach to planning and coordination of transport to support the Games; covering the transportation of spectators, athletes and the Games Family, while at the same time ensuring that any disruption to transport users is kept to a minimum.

When complete, a copy of the final Games Transport Plan will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

[Letter to the MAC on the shortage occupation lists report](#)

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