

Court orders disqualification of estate agent cartel director

Following a four day trial last month, Mr Michael Martin was today disqualified by the High Court from acting as a director or being concerned in the management of a company for 7 years. The court found that he had contributed to a breach of competition law by his former company, which owned and ran Gary Berryman Estate Agents in Burnham-On-Sea.

This is the first application for a competition disqualification order to come to trial.

The case against Mr Martin followed an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) which found in 2017 that 6 estate agents in the Burnham-on-Sea area in Somerset, with an estimated combined market share of up to 95%, had agreed to fix a minimum commission rate of 1.5% for residential estate agency services. The illegal cartel agreement, which lasted for a little over a year from February 2014, meant that local homeowners were denied the chance of getting a better deal when selling their property.

Mr Martin was not concerned with day-to-day sales, nor did he attend any of the meetings with the other estate agents at which the fee fixing agreement was made. Nevertheless, Mr Martin was made aware of the cartel agreement and took no steps to prevent or end Gary Berryman's participation, so contributing to the breach of competition law.

As a result, the court concluded in its judgment today that Mr Martin's misconduct fell below the standards of probity and competence appropriate for persons fit to be directors of companies, making Mr Martin unfit to be involved in the management of a company.

Mr Martin is the fourth director to be disqualified for their role in the estate agency cartel in Burnham-on-Sea. 3 other directors gave formal undertakings not to act as a director of a company for periods of between 3 and 5 years. Mr Martin refused to do so, and the CMA issued court proceedings against him in February 2019.

Michael Grenfell, the CMA's Executive Director of Enforcement, said:

Agreeing prices with competitors is one of the most serious ways in which a company can break competition law. It keeps prices or fees artificially high, harming individuals, businesses and the wider economy.

Company directors have a critical responsibility to make sure their companies don't take part in this kind of anti-competitive

behaviour.

Today's court order sends a clear message to company directors: even if you are not directly involved in the breach, you can still be held accountable for it. If you have information about a breach, as a director you must take all reasonable steps to prevent it. If you don't, you risk disqualification, and the CMA will not hesitate to take court action if needed.

Notes to Editors

1. Under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, the CMA has the power to apply to the court for an order disqualifying a director from holding company directorships or performing certain roles in relation to a company for a specified period if a company of which he or she is a director has breached competition law and their conduct makes them unfit to be a director or be involved in the management of a company. The Act also allows the CMA to accept a disqualification undertaking from a director instead of bringing proceedings. A disqualification undertaking has the same legal effect as a disqualification order.
2. For further information on the case, see the Residential estate agency services in the [Burnham-on-Sea area: Director Disqualification](#) case page.
3. In April 2018, the CMA secured the disqualification of 2 directors of Abbott and Frost Estate Agents Ltd in Burnham-on-Sea. Mr David Baker was disqualified for 3.5 years and Mr Julian Frost was disqualified for 3 years.
4. At the same time as the CMA issued proceedings in the High Court in February 2019 seeking the disqualification of Mr Martin, the CMA also issued proceedings seeking the disqualification of Mr Graham Thompson, formerly a director of Saxons PS Limited. The proceedings against Mr Thompson were discontinued following the acceptance by the CMA in April 2019 of an undertaking from Mr Thompson not to act as a director of a company for a period of 5 years.
5. Mr Michael Martin was a director of Gary Berryman Estate Agents Limited and its parent companies, The Property Group (2010) Limited and Warne Investments Limited.
6. In a separate case last month, the CMA secured the [disqualification of 2 Berkshire estate agent directors](#), whose companies were found to have taken part in an illegal price fixing cartel in Wokingham, Winnersh, Crowthorne, Bracknell and Warfield.
7. Today's disqualification order brings the total number of directors disqualified following a CMA investigation to 19. This total includes 1 director who was disqualified on his conviction for the criminal cartel offence in relation to the [supply of precast concrete drainage products](#).
8. The CMA is also currently seeking director disqualifications in further separate proceedings before the court in relation to its [supply of precast concrete drainage products: civil investigation](#).
9. For more information on the CMA follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and

[LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on Competition Act 1998 and civil cartels cases.

10. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or call 020 3738 6460.

[Defence pledges to evolve faster in the years ahead](#)

The 'away day' meeting, which brought together ministers, senior civil servants, and the Chiefs of the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, UK Strategic Command and Defence Intelligence, marks another waypoint in the MOD's renewed focus on the Integrated Review.

The Integrated Review will define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world and the long-term strategic aims for our national security and foreign policy. It will also set out the way in which the UK will be a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation and set a strong direction for recovery from COVID-19, at home and overseas, so that together we can "build back better."

The MOD is playing a central role in the review, ensuring that defence structures and capabilities evolve to remain relevant for a security environment characterised by constant competition between states and other hostile actors, and increasingly demanding proactivity and versatility from our Armed Forces.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

A post-Covid world will increase economic crisis, conflict and competition. The threats we face come in many forms across many continents. This week, I gathered together our service chiefs and MOD leadership at the Tower of London to discuss the form and capabilities we will need to deliver a modern, capable and strong Armed Forces ready to defend the United Kingdom in the decade to come.

Military chiefs discussed tailoring the Armed Forces' balance of capabilities, as well as how best to invest in people, skills, and equipment. The MOD is determined to spend 'smarter,' ensuring that procurement and infrastructure projects contribute to the UK's economy in the most efficient and effective ways possible.

The MOD is fully committed to its part in supporting the successful delivery of the Government's ambition for the Integrated Review. The Service Chiefs

are critical to achieving that goal, and the meeting is just one of many ways in which their military expertise and experience will feed into the process.

The Integrated Review will run in parallel to the Comprehensive Spending Review so that departments are provided with the resources they need to enact the review's conclusions.

Government announces £10 million for small businesses to kickstart tourism

- Government confirms £10 million new funding to boost tourism in England for renewal and recovery
- Funding will help small businesses in tourist destinations to access support of up to £5,000
- Government will also accelerate delivery of over £50 million for shovel-ready infrastructure projects over the coming months to help boost tourism
- Announcement follows £5 billion "New Deal" support announced by the Prime Minister this week

Communities that depend on tourism will receive a major boost from a new £10 million Kick-starting Tourism Package, the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Simon Clarke MP has today (3 July 2020) announced.

Speaking at the Local Government Association's annual conference, Minister Clarke confirmed the new funding will be distributed to communities immediately to kick start tourism in time for the summer as part of the government's drive to boost the recovery of the economy.

This is the latest package of support for economic recovery following the Prime Minister's announcement of the "New Deal" earlier this week, which will bring forward £5 billion of capital investment projects, supporting jobs and economic recovery.

The £10 million Kick-starting Tourism Package, will give small businesses in tourist destinations grants of up to £5,000 to help them adapt their businesses following the coronavirus pandemic.

Businesses can use the funding to pay for specialist professional advice such as human resources, legal or financial expertise, to adopt new technology and online systems or to purchase new equipment. 100% of the money will come from government with no obligation for businesses to contribute financially.

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Simon Clarke MP said:

When the Prime Minister announced the New Deal, he made it clear that the government is determined to change the country for the better, uniting and levelling up our regions.

Kick-starting domestic tourism will be key to our economic recovery and that is why I am delighted to announce £10 million in new funding for small businesses in tourist destinations, bringing jobs, investment, and financial support to the communities who need it the most.

Many areas across the country have experienced a significant fall in tourist and visitor numbers in recent months. The initiative will help ensure that tourist hot-spots are firmly open for business this summer.

In his speech at the Local Government Association conference, the minister also paid tribute to local leaders and frontline workers for their “tireless efforts” in responding to and tackling coronavirus. He also confirmed the government would publish its devolution white paper this autumn.

Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

Our tourism sector is hugely important – creating jobs, supporting businesses and driving local economies in villages, towns and cities across the country. It is vital that we help the sector bounce back and give it the platform to recover when it reopens from tomorrow.

This fund will help many small businesses in tourism destinations and with the infrastructure investment brought forward will provide a further boost for jobs and growth.

Today’s funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) builds on the success of the government’s £32 million ERDF investments in tourism-boosting projects across the country that are providing benefits in local areas now. Live projects include £1 million to support coastal improvements in Cornwall and £4.2 million to help the Lake District meet its low carbon ambitions.

Minister Clarke has also confirmed that over £50 million ERDF funding for shovel-ready infrastructure projects will now be accelerated and distributed later in the summer and autumn. The funding is for projects already in development which will boost local economies and visitor numbers, create jobs and promote investment.

The Kick-Starting Tourism Package is supported by the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014 to 2020. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>.

Funding will be allocated to each Local Growth Hubs based on how much of their employment base is linked to tourism and hospitality businesses. This means that coastal and rural areas – with a bigger proportion of their economy focused on tourism, hospitality and allied sectors, will get a larger share of the funds.

Growth hubs work across the country with local and national, public and private sector partners – such as Chambers of Commerce, FSB, universities, Enterprise Zones and banks, co-ordinating local business support and connecting businesses to the right help for their needs. They are locally driven, locally owned and at the heart of the government's plan to ensure business support is simpler, more joined up and easier to access.

Activities supported through the £10 million grant can include:

- one-to-many events providing guidance to respond to coronavirus
- small grants (£1,000 – £5,000) to:
 - help businesses access specialist professional advice e.g. human resources, accountants, legal, financial, IT / digital
 - purchase minor equipment to adapt or adopt new technology in order to continue to deliver business activity or diversify

The government has published [COVID-secure guidelines for people work in or run shops, branches, and stores](#).

The package follows the launch of the ['Good to Go' quality mark](#) by Visit England last week.

Support for businesses impacted by COVID-19:

Today's announcement forms part of a comprehensive package of support for businesses and workers during the economic emergency including:

- Earlier this week the Prime Minister announced £5 billion of capital investment projects, supporting jobs and the economic recovery, including £900 million for a range of 'shovel ready' local growth projects in England over the course of this year and next, as well as £96 million to accelerate investment in town centres and high streets through the Towns Fund this year. This will provide all 101 towns selected for town deals with £500,000 to £1 million to spend on projects such as improvements to parks, high streets, and transport.
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers are eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, backdated to 1 March. The scheme will continue until end of October 2020.

- £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses including a new Bounce Back Loans scheme, which will provide loans of up to £50,000 available to the smallest businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England will not have to pay business rates for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.
- A deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June 2020 – representing a £30 billion injection into the economy.
- A £12.3 billion package for local authorities to deliver grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.
- New temporary measures to safeguard the UK high street against aggressive debt recovery actions during the coronavirus pandemic.
- The High Streets Task Force has been offering advice, online resources and support to place leaders to take action now and build the capacity for recovery and longer-term transformation.
- The £50 million [Reopening High Streets Safely Fund](#) will help councils in England introduce a range of safety measures in a move to kick-start local economies, get people back to work and customers back to the shops.

As the country to the next stage of the recovery from COVID-19, the government is returning to its central mission to level up the nation through programmes like the £3.6 billion Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund.

With 100 places across England working on Towns Deals of up to £25 million each, the Fund will play an important part in the kick-starting of our economic recovery and levelling up the regions.

Resilience in light of COVID: Climate Action on the Road to COP26

Ladies and gentlemen.

In recent weeks, we have seen unprecedented heatwaves in Siberia, with areas which usually see temperatures of zero degrees Celsius reaching 25 degrees.

Across East Africa flash floods have displaced hundreds of thousands of people.

Over 150,000 acres have been destroyed in Arizona wildfires.

There have been earthquakes in Mexico, floods in central China and a tornado in India.

This has the most profound impact on people on the frontline of climate

change. Those who have contributed the least and have the fewest resources to adapt.

The first, and last, international travel I did as COP26 President, before the world went into lockdown, was a visit to the United Nations in New York.

I had an opportunity to talk to a whole range of colleagues. I spoke particularly to the permanent representatives of the Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. It was a really powerful and timely reminder of the urgency we need in tackling the threat of climate change.

As the representative of one of the Small Island Developing States said to me: "Tackling climate change is an existential issue for us. If we do not get it right, we will no longer have a place to call home."

So ladies and gentlemen, the small island nation states do not have the luxury of time.

We collectively, do not have the luxury of time.

And that is why we must act now.

That is why it is so vital that we are coming together today, to speak at this event.

I'd like to thank the organisers, E3G and the International Institute for Environment and Development for bringing us together.

As we look forward to COP26 next November, our aim is to ramp up ambition towards a climate-resilient, zero-carbon economy.

We want all countries to submit more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions, driving further cuts in carbon emissions by 2030.

And we want all nations committing to reaching net zero emissions as soon as possible.

Ahead of the summit, we have defined five areas which need particular attention to help us achieve our goals. Clean energy, clean transport, nature-based solutions, finance, and the issue we are here to talk about, adaptation and resilience.

We must help people, economies and the environment to adapt and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Adaptation and resilience is vital.

This was a personal priority for me when I was International Development Secretary in our government. At the United Nations Climate Action Summit last September, working with Egypt and friends from Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Malawi and St Lucia, we launched a Call for Action.

118 nations and over 80 organisations committed to raising their ambition.

When I revisited the UN in March, I met with these partners to discuss how we

can translate these political commitments into on-the-ground action. That is what matters at the end of the day.

And I look forward to sharing the results of this Coalition later in the year.

At UNCAS, the UK and convening partners also launched the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership. REAP as it's known.

REAP aims to make one billion people safer from disasters by 2025.

Bringing together key actors from the climate, humanitarian, and development communities, the partnership will transform global capacity to act early against climate extremes and disasters.

We all understand that better early warning systems and robust early action plans will give communities more time to prepare for extreme weather and ultimately save lives.

The REAP secretariat, backed by the UK's Department for International Development, is working closely with partners to develop a plan on delivering its ambitious targets.

We will work with the donor community to push for £500 million in commitments to make these targets a reality. The UK has already committed £80 million.

Of course, finance has a crucial role to play in adaptation and resilience.

The UN Environment Programme has estimated that adapting to intensifying climate change impacts could cost anywhere between \$140 billion to \$300 billion per year by 2030.

So, ahead of COP26, we will work with donor countries, Multilateral Development Banks and other public and private sources to increase access to finance for adaptation and resilience.

This is an area where the UK is leading by example.

Since 2011, UK International Climate Finance has supported 57 million people worldwide to cope with the effects of climate change.

And in September, at the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Boris Johnson committed the UK to doubling our contribution to £11.6 billion over the next five years to support developing countries.

But I think we all recognise that public finance alone will not be enough.

We must also mobilise private sector finance and make sure that climate risk is factored into every single investment decision taken around the world.

That is why the UK Government is working with the Coalition for Climate Resilient Investment. A private sector-led initiative building resilience on-the-ground by quantifying, pricing and reducing the climate risks faced by

new investments.

Particularly in infrastructure.

Since its launch last year, the Coalition has grown rapidly to over 50 members with over \$8 trillion of assets under management.

I would urge any financial institutions here today to join this Coalition.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, I believe that we are at a positive inflection point in our joint endeavour on climate action.

As we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic we are seeing Governments, business, and civil society across the world uniting in their calls for climate action.

According to polling firm Ipsos Mori, two thirds of the people on our planet believe that the climate crisis is as serious as Covid-19.

Of course, countries around the world have responded with urgency to helping their populations through the Covid pandemic, as we have done in the UK.

That is absolutely the right approach.

And as we turn our attention to the economic fightback, we need to also reflect this desire to address the climate crisis in our economic response.

On Tuesday, some of you will have seen that Prime Minister Boris Johnson unveiled an ambitious economic strategy for the UK.

A 'New Deal' to help build our economy back to health.

To build back better.

And to build back greener.

Of course, this opportunity does not just apply to the UK, but to every country in the world.

We all have an opportunity to create a fairer, greener and more resilient global economy.

One that puts adaptation and resilience right at its centre.

And we can only achieve that in partnership with all of you.

So I look forward to us continuing to come together in the lead up to COP26 to build on what we have already started.

Thank you so much.

Cameroon: 145 Commonwealth Points of Light

World news story

Her Majesty The Queen recognises Cameroonian volunteer with Commonwealth Points of Light award for service during COVID-19 pandemic.



Comfort Mussa, 145 Commonwealth Points of Light

The story of Comfort Mussa

Comfort Mussa is the founder of [SISTERSPEAK237](#), which supports disabled and vulnerable people in Yaounde by coordinating the provision of hand sanitisers and masks, and sharing key messaging around COVID-19. Comfort has also started a project across the seven regions of Cameroon to ensure that response services are gender and disability inclusive. Comfort has been a long-time supporter of women and minority groups, empowering them through her organisation to tell their stories and breaking the silence on taboo subjects seldomly reported.

As part of the legacy of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London 2018, Her Majesty The Queen – as Head of the Commonwealth – is thanking inspirational volunteers across the 54 Commonwealth nations for the difference they are making in their communities and beyond, by recognising one volunteer from each Commonwealth country every week. By sharing these stories of service, the [Commonwealth Points of Light](#) celebrates inspirational acts of volunteering across the Commonwealth. It also helps to inspire others to make their own contribution to tackling some of the greatest social challenges of our time, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

As Comfort said:

I am absolutely delighted to be recognised for this award. I'm honoured to accept this award and I share it with all the

volunteers at SISTERSPEAK237 and our Access Community for persons with disabilities. With the COVID-19 pandemic my team and I are constantly asking ourselves, what can we do to help? Our drive has been to meet the needs of people in vulnerable communities, especially for women and persons with disabilities, through advocacy, campaigning and story-telling. The impact we have had so far is encouraging and makes volunteering worthwhile. I thank Her Majesty The Queen, for this recognition.

Rowan James Laxton, UK High Commissioner in Cameroon, said:

My hearty congratulations to Comfort Mussa on winning this year's prestigious Commonwealth Points of Light award in Cameroon. Her unstinting support for women's rights, social justice and public health is making a huge difference to the lives of some of the most disadvantaged people here. Her work is a shining example of the impact that dedicated and skilled volunteers can make to brighten people's lives.

Previous laureates from Cameroon

- 2018: Dr George Bwelle of ASCOVIME, a Yaounde-based medical volunteering organisation helping disadvantaged people with free medical support.
- 2018: Noela Lyonga of the NOELA LYONGA FOUNDATION based in Buea, a volunteer organisation that mobilises youth to become actors of change in their community.
- 2019: Fadimatou Noutchemo Simo of the YOUNG AFRICAN AVIATION PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION (YAAPA) for her work as a volunteer encouraging youth and especially young girls to take up careers in aviation.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

The Commonwealth is a diverse community of 54 nations that work together to promote prosperity, democracy and peace. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting brought together leaders from all the 54 Member countries to reaffirm common values, address shared global challenges and agree how to work to create a better future for all citizens, especially young people. Voluntary service is a vital part of this agenda, which is why Her Majesty The Queen has chosen to recognise outstanding volunteers across the Commonwealth in this special way.