

Government launches fraud squad

A new team at the heart of government has been told to hunt down fraud committed against the public purse, with a £180 million target set for the first 12 months.

Government Efficiency Minister Jacob Rees-Mogg issued the rallying cry today while launching the new Public Sector Fraud Authority – setting it a first-year target of £180 million of identified fraud benefits. The Domestic And Economic Efficiency And Value For Money Committee has challenged the new organisation to work with departments to agree longer-term targets by December.

The Public Sector Fraud Authority will be made up of counter fraud and data experts, using best-in-class tools and advanced analytics to help departments and public bodies protect public money. It will be supported by a cross sector Advisory Panel that will provide expert advice and help shape the strategic approach to public sector fraud prevention and reduction. The Advisory Panel will have a Chair, who will be announced in September.

Backed by £25 million of new funding, the organisation will modernise the government's counter fraud response, working with departments and public bodies to test their fraud defences, using leading practice and modern techniques, and then to help them put stronger safeguards in place. It will do this by:

- Agreeing ambitious counter fraud plans for departments and public bodies and reviewing progress
- Regularly and directly briefing Cabinet Ministers including HM Treasury and Cabinet Office on the latest fraud landscape
- Providing expert support to departments and public bodies about the fraud risks and threats they face, then help to design defences against them and test their effectiveness
- Building a new National Counter Fraud Data Analytics Service that will provide advanced data capabilities, such as social network analysis, to surface, fight and prevent fraud against taxpayers
- Enhancing the use of fraud intelligence across the public sector, and with other sectors, to combat specific threats.

Minister for Government Efficiency, Jacob Rees-Mogg, said:

Public sector fraud is not an attack on a single person, and so to many the pain feels less sharp than when directed at individuals. But fraud attacks on government are attacks on money earned by much put-upon taxpayers.

They are an attack on the emergency services whose funding they deplete, similarly they steal money from infrastructure projects.

As criminals develop more sophisticated tools, we too must adapt and modernise.

So we're attracting the brightest minds and equipping them with tools to detect, prevent and deter those who seek to steal money intended to fund vital public services.

The Public Sector Fraud Authority will launch with a target of working with departments and public bodies to detect and prevent £180 million of fraud. This will be delivered in part by supporting BEIS and bank lenders with advanced data analytics expertise and tools to find fraud and recover fraud linked to the Bounce Back Loan scheme.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Simon Clarke said:

The launch of the new body will put a laser-like focus on fraud and renew our efforts to combat people taking advantage of our public services and support.

It will reinforce wider investment in government to crack down on fraud and mis-claiming, including £210 million for HMRC to further tackle fraud, and £510 million for DWP to target welfare fraud in 2021.

Tackling fraud will drive efficiency, saving taxpayers' hard-earned money which is even more important as we know people are struggling with the rising cost of living.

Ahead of a permanently appointed head of the Authority, the organisation will be led by Mark Cheeseman OBE, an internationally recognised expert in public sector fraud, who led the creation of the government's Counter Fraud Profession and the set up of the International Public Sector Fraud Forum – a collaboration between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the UK to share, agree and publish leading practice on fraud management in the public sector.

Interim Public Sector Fraud Authority CEO, Mark Cheeseman OBE said:

The creation of the Public Sector Fraud Authority represents a landmark in our fight against public sector fraud. We know that fraudsters are a committed, capable and evolving adversary.

To respond to this we must raise our ambition and challenge ourselves to increase our impact on this often unseen and underestimated crime. The PSFA will support public servants across government and public bodies to take that step – to innovate and to modernise our approach to fraud.

□□The launch builds on the recent success of the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), a service run by counter fraud experts in the Cabinet Office that uses technology and data matching to find and prevent fraud. Between 2018 and 2022, the service was used to detect and prevent more than £200m of public sector pension fraud.

[Charity Commission disqualifies two former trustees of Manchester charity](#)

Two former trustees of the charity have been disqualified by the Commission from holding any trustee or senior management role in a charity for 7 years. They were found responsible for long term misconduct and/or mismanagement at the charity, and failure to comply with an order of the Commission.

The Moss Side and Hulme Community Development Trust was registered in 2002 with the aim of regenerating areas of social and economic deprivation in Moss Side, Hulme and adjacent areas of Manchester.

This is the third statutory inquiry into the charity during the two individuals' time as trustees. The first was a class inquiry in 2017 for charities which have defaulted on their statutory filing obligations with the Commission on two or more occasions in the last five years. In 2018, a second statutory inquiry was opened into this charity after the trustees failed again to submit accounting information and concerns about potential unauthorised payments to a trustee.

That inquiry concluded in November 2020 following the receipt of the overdue accounts and the issuing of an order under section 84 of the Act that required the two trustees to, among other governance improvements, recruit more trustees in line with the governing document, advertise and hold an annual general meeting (AGM), and ensure that there was no further trustee remuneration.

Mr Hartley Hanley and Mr Mike Bisson, did not, as ordered, produce a report detailing how they complied with each requirement set out in the order. The regulator made numerous attempts to contact them to assess their compliance with the order, but was met with either little engagement or no response. As a result, the third inquiry was opened in September 2021.

The regulator has concluded that Mr Hanley's and Mr Bisson's failure to comply with an order of the Commission, and their persistent and prolonged failures amount to misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of this charity. They were each consequently disqualified from acting as a trustee for 7 years.

During the course of the inquiry, the Commission used its powers to appoint

three trustees, who called an AGM alongside Mr Hanley and Mr Bisson. Before the AGM took place, the new trustees acted to remove Mr Hanley as a trustee, and Mr Bisson resigned. The three new trustees, who were ordered to stand down at the AGM, were re-elected by the charity's members. Alongside two more trustees who have been appointed since, there are now 5 new trustees responsible for the management and administration of the charity.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Charity Commission said:

Trustees of charities should show accountability towards the communities they serve, and the wider public. This includes complying with an order of the Commission.

Mr Hanley and Mr Bisson are responsible for persistent and prolonged failures in the management of this charity. We have taken robust regulatory action to ban these individuals from serving as trustees or senior managers in any charity for 7 years. I hope that the new trustee board can deliver on the charity's aims for the people of Moss Side and Hulme.

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 opened the inquiry on 29 September 2021. View the full [inquiry report](#).

CMA requires Dye & Durham to sell TM Group

Following a Phase 2 merger investigation, the CMA has found that the acquisition of TM Group by Dye & Durham substantially lessens competition in the supply of property search services in England and Wales.

Property search reports are used to make sure that buyers and sellers have all the facts they need about a property – including title, access rights, planning restrictions, water and sewerage services, flood risk and other important information – before a sale goes ahead. The reports are ordered from firms like Dye & Durham and TM Group by conveyancers, solicitors, estate

agents, and mortgage brokers on behalf of people and businesses buying and selling properties. Charges for property search services arise in almost every property transaction and are typically included within the conveyancing fees paid by homebuyers.

Dye & Durham, an international provider of cloud-based software and technology solutions, announced the £91.5 million purchase of Swindon-based TM Group in July 2021. Both businesses offer property search services to clients in the UK under a variety of different brands.

The firms chose not to notify the CMA about the deal but, as part of its ongoing monitoring of mergers and acquisitions, the CMA identified potential concerns and began an initial investigation in October 2021. It was referred for an in-depth investigation, overseen by an independent inquiry group, in December 2021.

The inquiry group has considered a wide range of evidence, including from the merging businesses' own strategic documents and a survey of customers, as well as extensive information provided by customers, competitors and other industry players.

The firms were close rivals before the merger and the evidence shows that the combined business would be the largest provider in the market. The CMA also found that the merger would only leave 2 other large national suppliers in the market and that competition from smaller suppliers would not offset the competition lost by the merger.

The CMA has therefore concluded that the merger would reduce competition and could lead to less innovation, higher prices and lower quality services in the market. This could mean a worse deal for people and businesses buying or selling residential and commercial properties in England and Wales.

To address this loss of competition, the CMA has concluded that Dye & Durham must sell TM Group to a suitable buyer to be approved by the CMA.

Richard Feasey, chair of the independent CMA group conducting this inquiry, said:

The merger of 2 of the biggest players in this market would be bad news for anyone buying or selling property in England and Wales.

Competition drives innovation and keeps prices down. Without it, we can pay more for worse products and services.

To address our concerns, Dye & Durham must sell TM Group in its entirety to a suitable buyer.

For more information, visit the [Dye & Durham/TM Group merger inquiry page](#).

1. The UK merger control regime is voluntary, which means that merging businesses are free to choose whether to notify a merger to the CMA. The

fact that a merger has not been voluntarily notified to the CMA does not mean that the CMA will not review it. The CMA has a duty to track merger activity to determine whether any unnotified merger may give rise to a substantial lessening of competition. The CMA's Mergers Intelligence Committee, which keeps merger activity under review, decided to call in the merger for review after Dye & Durham acquired TMG in July 2021.

2. There are two routes by which the CMA may come to review a merger (details of which can be found in the CMA's [quick mergers guidance](#), paragraph 2.5). Businesses can formally notify a merger to the CMA by completing a Merger Notice or the CMA's Merger's Intelligence Committee can investigate mergers that have not been notified to it.
 3. Before the merger, the Parties were two of the four largest suppliers of property search reports, with the other two large competitors being ATI and Landmark.
 4. Canadian-based Dye & Durham has expanded globally over the last few years, into territories such as Australia and Ireland, as well as the United Kingdom. Since 2016, it has acquired 11 firms based in England and Wales, including PIE, PSG Connect, Index, York Place, Terrafirma and Future Climate Info (FCI), and one in Northern Ireland.
 5. The CMA has concluded that a full divestiture of TM Group would be an effective and proportionate remedy to address the substantial lessening of competition and resulting adverse effects it has found.
 6. Any potential purchaser must satisfy the CMA's normal purchaser suitability criteria, I.e., that a purchaser: is independent of the merging parties; has the necessary capability to compete in the relevant markets; is committed to competing in the relevant markets; and will not create further competition concerns.
 7. The CMA's approach to the remedies process is set out in [Merger remedies guidance](#) CMA87 (13 December 2018).
 8. The CMA has the choice of implementing any final remedy decision either by accepting final undertakings pursuant to Section 82 of the Enterprise Act 2002 ('the Act') if the Parties wish to offer them, or by making a final order under Section 84 of the Act. Either the final undertakings or the final order must be implemented within 12 weeks of publication of our final report (this period may be extended once by up to 6 weeks under exceptional circumstances), including the period for any formal public consultation on the draft undertakings or order as specified in Schedule 10 of the Act.
 9. The final undertakings or the final order will require Dye & Durham to complete the full divestiture of TM Group to a purchaser approved by the CMA within a timescale specified by the CMA in Chapter 10 of the Final Report. The CMA does not normally publish the timescale within which the Parties must complete a divestiture remedy.
 10. Under Section 120 of the Act parties have the right to seek a review of decisions in merger cases. These applications are heard by the Competition Appeal Tribunal.
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UKHO receives CoreTrustSeal accreditation

News story

Recognising seabed mapping authority, data integrity and security standards



Following substantial investments in both our internal technology infrastructure and our customer facing services, the UKHO has been awarded the widely recognised CoreTrustSeal accreditation and has been certified as a Trustworthy Data Repository by the CoreTrustSeal Standards and Certification Board for our bathymetry data archive.

This accreditation embodies our core transformational theme of customer centricity, and it rewards our long-term commitment to technology excellence, data integrity, and security standards.

The CoreTrustSeal accreditation reinforces our position as the UK's accredited Bathymetry Data Archive Centre (DAC) and one of the seven accredited DACs that make up the wider Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN), a network that we are proud to be part of.

Receiving the CoreTrustSeal accreditation is also a crucial milestone in the advancement of our Seabed Mapping Services and the development of our seabed-focused product offering. It also supports our aims for the newly unveiled UK Centre for Seabed Mapping (UK CSM) and our work under the Seabed 2030 framework. In this context, the CoreTrustSeal accreditation is of critical strategic importance to ensure the UKHO remains the UK authority for archiving bathymetry data.

Some of the improvements that we have made to our Seabed Mapping Services that significantly contributed to the Board's decision to grant us the accreditation include the addition of daily updates of new bathymetric surveys, the enabling of web mapping service for visual display, and the cleansing of over 6000 metadata records available to the latest MEDIN 3.1 standard, which also ensures compliance with wider initiatives such as INSPIRE and GEMINI.

The achievement of this accreditation follows an extensive application process for which the CoreTrustSeal Accreditation Board required detailed supporting evidence in over 16 areas, ranging from confidentiality and ethics to data integrity, authenticity, quality, and security. This accolade is also deserved recognition of all the hard work and efforts of the wider teams that continue to develop and support the UKHO's overall technology estate.

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[Applications for Chevening Scholarships are open](#)

The British Embassy Beirut is pleased to announce that applications for the UK Government's flagship Chevening Scholarships programme opened on 2 August. Applicants should apply [online](#) by 1 Nov 2022.

The scholarship offers full financial support for scholars to study for any eligible master's degree at any UK university whilst also gaining access to a wide range of exclusive academic, professional, and cultural experiences.

For eligibility and criteria, please visit this [link](#)

Chevening Scholarships are awarded to potential future leaders and individuals from all backgrounds who can demonstrate strong leadership and networking skills. They should have the commitment and skills required to create positive change in their respective field and/or community, and to show how a master's degree from a UK university would help them achieve that upon their return to their home country.

Lebanese citizens (and Palestinians residing in Lebanon) are eligible to apply under the Lebanon scheme in any subject area. The Lebanon scheme also includes the 'Rebecca Dykes Chevening Scholarship' which is offered every year to a woman who wishes to pursue a master's in an area related to Gender Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Development and Human Rights and Refugee and Migration Studies or other similar fields.

For the second consecutive year, the Chevening Siren Associates Scholarship will offer one scholarship to a Lebanese national (or Palestinian national who would be normally resident in Lebanon) and be located there at the time of making an application to an individual who wishes to pursue a master's in Governance, International Development, Human Rights or Public Financial Management/ Administration at one of the [UK's top 20 universities](#)

Since the programme was created in 1983, there are over 50,000 Chevening Alumni worldwide. Many of whom have become leaders and innovators, breaking

boundaries across a variety of professional fields. There are more than 1,500 scholarships on offer globally for the 2023/2024 academic year, demonstrating the UK's ongoing commitment towards developing the leaders of tomorrow.

The Chevening Alumni Association in Lebanon consists over 200 alumni members. For eligibility and criteria check out the [link](#) You can also contact the British Embassy's Chevening Officer abir.breir@fcdo.gov.uk