

Coronavirus advice for Companies House customers, employees and suppliers



At Companies House, our priority is to protect the welfare of our employees.

In response to the potential spread of the virus, we're following Public Health England guidelines. The situation is dynamic and could change quickly, so we're preparing for a number of scenarios.

Access to our offices

There are restrictions to public access to our offices and the delivery of paper documents.

If you're filing documents with us, it's quicker and easier to use our online services. You can:

Edinburgh

Our Edinburgh office is now closed to the public. Please deliver any paper documents to the Companies House letterbox next to the office building.

London

Our London office will close to the public from 5pm today (Tuesday 17 March 2020). There is no letterbox at the office – you must send all mail directly to our Cardiff office:

Companies House
Crown Way
Cardiff
CF14 3UZ
Cardiff

Same day services

We will suspend all our same day services from 3pm today (Tuesday 17 March 2020) until further notice. Any orders currently being processed will be completed and posted out to customers.

Suppliers

Do not send us paper invoices by post. You should email your PDF invoices to accountspayable@companieshouse.gov.uk – this will help us to continue processing your invoices while we're working remotely.

Stay up to date

For the latest information and updates:

More information

[Coronavirus: if your company cannot file accounts with Companies House on time](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): UK government response](#)

[COVID-19: guidance for employers and businesses](#)

Published 12 March 2020

Last updated 17 March 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 17 March 2020

Closures to Edinburgh and London office and same day services suspended.

2. 17 March 2020

Information for suppliers sending us invoices.

3. 12 March 2020

First published.

[Payment software deal cleared by CMA](#)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been investigating Bottomline Technology's completed purchase of the Experian Payments Gateway (EPG) business from Experian Limited.

Bottomline and EPG provide payments software used by businesses to submit direct debits, make payroll payments and pay suppliers. This software allows customers of both companies to make payments via the Bacs and Faster Payments Direct Corporate Access systems.

After completing its initial Phase 1 investigation, the CMA was concerned that the merger may reduce competition, leading to increased prices, reduced product availability, or reduced investment in innovation. As such, the deal was referred to an in-depth Phase 2 probe.

Following this further analysis, carried out by an independent group of panel members, the CMA announced in February that it had provisionally found the deal would not negatively impact competition.

This is largely because EPG was no longer a strong force in the market and that, following the deal, there remains enough alternative companies competing with Bottomline for customers. The CMA also looked in detail at the possibility that, under alternative ownership, EPG would have become a more active competitor than it was before the merger, but determined that this was not the case.

Having consulted on this provisional finding, the CMA has now confirmed clearance of the deal.

For more information, visit the [Bottomline Technologies \(de\), Inc / Experian Limited merger inquiry case page](#).

[Former barrister has bankruptcy restrictions extended by court](#)

On 10 March 2020 at the High Court of Justice in London, ICC Judge Mullen imposed a 10-year Bankruptcy Restrictions Order against Paul Baxendale-Walker.

For a further 10 years, Paul Baxendale-Walker – also known as Paul Chaplin – will need to disclose his bankruptcy status if he attempts to secure £500 or more in credit and he cannot act as a company director without the permission of the court.

The court heard that Paul Baxendale-Walker had previously advised wealthy individuals on tax avoidance schemes, which were later found not to be legal.

Paul Baxendale-Walker, who had also previously been struck off as a barrister and solicitor, was declared bankrupt in the High Court in July 2018 on the petition of a creditor. This followed a court judgment earlier that year in January 2018 where it was found that Paul Baxendale-Walker gave negligent tax

advice to a client, resulting in the former barrister being liable for damages of circa £16 million.

During his bankruptcy proceedings, however, Paul Baxendale-Walker failed to make a full and frank disclosure of his affairs to the Official Receiver or joint trustees.

He failed to disclose the existence or extent of his ownership of a home – purchased for close to £300,000 shortly before his bankruptcy – or that he attempted to gift his ownership in the home to an associate to the detriment of his creditors.

Paul Baxendale-Walker failed to disclose he held an interest in the lease of a property in Knightsbridge rented for more than £177,000, in total.

He understated his annual income to the Official Receiver and joint trustees, and also permitted or assisted the concealment, removal or destruction of electronic devices believed to contain records relating to his affairs.

In making the order of a 10-year bankruptcy restriction, ICC Judge Mullen found Paul Baxendale-Walker had sought to place obstacles before the Official Receiver and his joint trustees in bankruptcy.

The Official Receiver, Anthony Hannon, said:

Paul Baxendale-Walker knew exactly what he was doing when he failed to disclose all his assets to the Official Receiver and the courts have rightly recognised the severity of his actions by restricting his activities for a decade.

The case aptly demonstrates that a bankrupt has an absolute duty to co-operate with the Official Receiver and the Trustee in Bankruptcy. People in bankruptcy must co-operate to provide a full, frank and honest explanation of their assets, income and records in their estate and must make all reasonable endeavours to ensure that assets are realised for the benefit of the creditors.

Paul Baxendale-Walker's date of birth is February 1964.

Public-facing details of [Paul Baxendale-Walker's Bankruptcy Restrictions Order](#) is available on the Individual Insolvency Register.

Legal proceedings

- On 4 July 2019, the Secretary of State authorised the Official Receiver to seek a bankruptcy restrictions order
- Proceedings were issued by the Official Receiver in the High Court of Justice on 8 July 2019
- On 10 December 2019 the matter was heard in the High Court
- On 13 February 2020 the Court delivered its verdict
- The case was adjourned for further consideration as to the appropriate

tariff and on 10 March 2020 a bankruptcy restriction order was made against Mr Baxendale-Walker for 10 years.

Guidance

Bankruptcy restrictions are wide ranging. The effects are the same whether you are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or to an undertaking. Guidance on the main statutory consequences flowing from a [bankruptcy restrictions order or undertaking](#).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Queen's Counsel Appointments Ceremony 2020: Lord Chancellor speech](#)

It's a great pleasure for me to be here today to preside over the formal appointment of all those 'taking silk' and receiving the rank of Queen's Counsel, as well as those being awarded the grand Honorary Queen's Counsel. And it is also a great pleasure to welcome you to these august surroundings. As the oldest part of the Palace of Westminster, the hall has stood for the best part of a thousand years. When fire broke out here in 1834 it was decided that efforts should be concentrated on saving the great hall, leaving the rest – including the old Commons and Lords that is – to burn down.

The hall has served many purposes down the years but at the time of the fire it was used mainly as courts of law – housing the Court of King's Bench, the Court of Common Pleas and the Court of Chancery. I'm sure the decision to concentrate on the hall and leave the rest to ruin had nothing to do with the esteem in which lawyers were held over politicians(!).

Today, however is all about esteem. It's about you as professionals at a high point in your career. It is a public recognition by the Crown – of your excellence, of your experience, and your expertise in your particular fields of law.

Steeped in tradition going back centuries, the title of Queen's Counsel has always been a mark of quality. Attaining it sets you apart among your peers and signifies supreme confidence in your abilities as advocates and as lawyers.

From its common law precedents to its independent judiciary, we know the English legal system is admired the world over. Our elite rank of legal professionals, which you are joining today, is a key building block in that

reputation for excellence.

I hope it is not too early to suggest that some of you may go on to become judges yourselves – adding your expertise to the bench for the benefit of a system which has given you so much. But that can, of course, come later – this ceremony is about your achievements to date.

I know getting here won't have been easy. Literally as well as metaphorically may I say. As a barrister and a law officer for over 25 years, I know that much of your careers won't have been spent in wig and gown advocating for a client but outside the court, mastering a brief so you can make those appearances before a judge and jury, or any specialist tribunal so effortless.

As I look around the room, not only can I see the new silks nodding along but their partners and families too. You've all collectively made sacrifices so that today could happen and I think it is really fitting that they are here with you.

You will rightly be very proud. I know you will use your new status as an opportunity to enhance your roles as leaders in the law and as role models for the next generation of legal minds. This is something silks have taken very seriously for generations.

I am delighted this year that, on my recommendation as Lord Chancellor with the support of the selection panel, Her Majesty has been pleased to grant letters patent conferring the title of Queen's Counsel on 114 barristers and solicitor-advocates.

The process of application and selection is rightly a gruelling one – both for those desiring the title and those advising on the merits of achieving it. I am grateful to each of you for your dedication to seeking the award and to the panel for their sound and independent advice on awarding it.

There are also 10 awards this year for Queen's Counsel, *Honoris Causa* – to individuals who have made a significant contribution to the law of England and Wales outside practice in the courts.

I want to express my gratitude to the honorary award selection panel, which consisted of:

- Annabel Burns a Director at Ministry of Justice who chaired
- Professor Thom Brooks, the Vice-President of the Society of Legal Scholars
- David Cooper, from the Association of Costs Lawyers
- Carl Creswell, a Director at the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
- Simon Davis, the President of the Law Society
- Stephanie Pagni, the General Counsel for Barclays UK
- Professor Rebecca Probert, the President of the Society of Legal Scholars
- Lady Justice Vivien Rose DBE from the Court of Appeal

- Andrew Walker QC, the former Chair of the Bar Council
- And Amelia Wright, a Deputy Director at the Ministry of Justice

I want to take a few moments to talk about each of the individuals receiving the honorary award but let me first say how pleased I am to see such a diverse list this year. Diversity is, I think, a strength – because it amplifies a wider skillset.

The more diverse our legal thinkers, the better the law becomes.

A strong advocate for inclusion, Elizabeth Gardiner the first woman to hold the position of First Parliamentary Counsel. Under her leadership, the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel has been instrumental in the drafting of recent primary legislation.

Lynda Gibbs is the Dean of the Inns of Court College of Advocacy. She co-authored the national 'Advocacy and Vulnerable' training course, which supports advocates in how to treat vulnerable people in the criminal justice system.

Millicent Grant's commitment to excellence in legal practice, as well as driving diversity and social mobility truly enriches our legal sector. She is the first person of a non-white/minority ethnic background to lead any legal professional membership body in this country.

The work of King's College London's Professor Eva Lomnicka is routinely cited in court and her contributions on consumer credit law have been instrumental in overhauling the system. As a trustee of the Money Advice Trust, she is also committed to supporting those who find themselves in financial difficulties.

Glyn Maddocks, a fellow countryman, is recognised for his expertise, not just in overturning specific wrongful convictions, but in the way they are dealt with as a legal concept; and is a founding trustee of the Centre for Criminal Appeals.

A legal academic noted for her expertise in public child law, Professor Judith Masson's work has not only improved the understanding among legal professionals of care proceedings but has resulted in significant changes to the law.

Professor Clare McGlynn of my alma mater, Durham University, has had a major hand in the development of the law and policy on the regulation of image-based abuse and sexual violence, including the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.

A former President of the Law Society, Rodger Pannone's contributions to the law – from improving personal injury law to his pioneering work on health and safety legislation – are wide-ranging. He played a key role in securing rights of audience for solicitors.

Professor Jane Stapleton is Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, and a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy. She is recognised

internationally as an expert on causation and duty of care in the law of obligations. Her work is frequently cited in judgments.

Founder of the InterLaw Diversity Forum, Daniel Winterfeldt is a solicitor at Reed Smith. His commitment to fostering inclusion in the legal sector has seen him work closely with government, regulatory bodies, and law firms, particularly around changing culture.

And that is just a brief mention of their contributions to the law, which I know go so much further. As do those of all the appointees today.

Let me just say in closing how pleased I am to preside over this ancient ceremony. The surroundings here today certainly add something to that sense of tradition. I know you will feel, to coin an old adage, the hand of history on your shoulders as you each now take up your new rank.

The title of Queen's Counsel is not just a mark befitting respect but a signifier of the esteem in which you are held and I wish you every continued success for the future.

Nicholas Saphir appointed as new Chair for the AHDB

Nicholas Saphir has been appointed as the new Chair of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) for a three-year term with effect from 1 April 2020.

Appointments to the board of the AHDB are made by Defra Ministers, with the approval of Ministers in the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.

Nicholas has an impressive track record in marketing and trade within the food and farming industry, including his work to build the Organic Milk Producers' Cooperative (Omsco) into the world's second largest dedicated organic milk cooperative.

He also has a successful record of chairing industry and government bodies in the food and farming sector. This includes being the chairman of the Central Council for Agricultural and Horticultural Cooperation, founder chairman of Food from Britain, president of the Fresh Produce Consortium and chairman of the Agricultural Forum.

The appointment comes after two terms of service from outgoing Chair Sir Peter Kendall, who has steered the organisation through a time of change and growth.

AHDB Chair Nicholas Saphir, said:

I'm delighted to be involved with AHDB at this pivotal time of change for UK agriculture and horticulture. The AHDB has a vital role to play in helping to equip farmers, growers and processors to make the most of the opportunities and tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

Victoria Prentis, Farming Minister at Defra, said:

Nicholas Saphir has a wealth of experience in the food and farming industry, with a diverse understanding of marketing and trade across a variety of sectors.

I am confident he will provide the AHDB with strong leadership, clear vision and enthusiasm as the sector enters a time of change.

I'd also like to thank Peter Kendall for his dedication to the AHDB, and the sector as a whole, over the past six years.

Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

I would like to welcome Nicholas Saphir to his new role as Chair of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).

I am sure his years of experience in the food and farming industry will be invaluable as AHDB looks to lead and advise the farming sector on the changes and challenges ahead. I look forward to working with AHDB and associated organisations to strengthen and protect farmers and growers in Wales.

Scottish Rural Affairs Minister Mairi Gougeon said:

We are pleased to hear that Nicholas Saphir has been successful in his appointment as the new chair of AHDB. Nicholas brings with him diverse national and international experiences in the food and farming industry which we believe will be valuable for the sector moving forward. We look forward to working with Nicholas and AHDB to further arable and dairy farming in Scotland.

DAERA Minister Edwin Poots MLA said:

I would like to congratulate Nicholas Saphir on his appointment as Chair of The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and to

thank Peter Kendall for the work that he has done over the past six years.

AHDB Chief Executive Jane King, said:

Nicholas brings a wealth of agricultural and commercial experience which will be invaluable to helping AHDB strengthen its role during a significant time of change for industry. Myself and the AHDB team are really looking forward to working with him.