

Secretary of State co-chairs coal tip safety meeting with First Minister



Secretary of State Simon Hart and First Minister Mark Drakeford chaired a meeting to discuss coal tip safety following the recent storms. The meeting was attended by the leader of the WLGA, the Coal Authority and Natural Resources Wales.

The First Minister and Secretary of State agreed their governments would work together to urgently assess the safety of tips and ensure they are being properly inspected and monitored. They agreed the following actions:

- all relevant agencies will work together to share resources and technical expertise on inspection and monitoring & establish a common set of standards for risk assessment;
- information will be provided to people living in the south Wales valleys about the safety of local tips, coordinated by a single point of contact.

The Welsh and UK Governments will co-ordinate this vital work and the meeting will reconvene next week.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

Following the unprecedented weather conditions and flooding brought by recent storms, urgent work is being carried out to assess any risk posed to people or property and to confirm that everyone with a legal responsibility around the tips is fulfilling their safety obligations. Authorities and agencies involved are working together and good progress is being made on this vital work.

First Minister Mark Drakeford said:

I met the Secretary of State to discuss how our Governments can work together to ensure coal tips across Wales are being managed responsibly. I want to reassure people living close to coal tips

across Wales that we are taking this situation seriously and we will continue to keep them informed.

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[Bans for bosses of £9m property investment scheme](#)

Kevin Antony Neil (57) and Peter Leonard Shuttleworth (37) were each handed down 11-year directorship disqualifications by Judge Burton at the High Court of Justice in London on 11 February 2020.

Effective immediately, Kevin Neil and Peter Shuttleworth are banned from acting as directors or directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

Kevin Neil and Peter Shuttleworth's misconduct came to the attention of the Insolvency Service after the company they were directors of, Colonial Capital Group PLC, entered into liquidation in February 2018.

Investigators uncovered that Colonial Capital Group, based in Chelmsford, Essex, was incorporated in February 2014 and the company invited investors to subscribe to bonds with the incentive of a 12% fixed interest rate per annum.

Bond holders were told their payments would be invested into Colonial Capital Group, who would then forward the funds to a connected American company over whom Colonial Capital Group would hold security.

The American company would use the money to buy and renovate distressed properties in the USA and once the properties were renovated, they would be rented out or sold. Income secured from rents or proceeds of the sale would then be passed back to the bond holders.

Between February 2014 and March 2017, Colonial Capital Group secured just over £9 million from bond holders.

Investigators, however, unearthed that no funds were invested into the connected American company over whom Colonial Capital Group would hold security.

£6.6 million was paid, via an unsecured loan, to a separate company in the UK that shared the same directors as Colonial Capital Group. A further £2.3 million was paid to a separate connected American company over whom Colonial Capital Group held no security.

Enquiries found that Colonial Capital Group had 244 investors and they are owed approximately £11 million, which includes unpaid interest due.

Dave Elliott, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

Whenever anyone injects funds into an investment opportunity, at some point they will want to see some form of returns. However, these unsuspecting victims saw no returns on the millions they invested and instead Kevin Neil and Peter Shuttleworth used the funds to pay other connected companies.

11-year bans are substantial disqualifications, severely curtailing the ability of Kevin Neil and Peter Shuttleworth from running companies, and should serve as a stark warning to other directors that they shouldn't attempt to hoodwink their investors.

Kevin Antony Neil's date of birth is March 1962.

Peter Leonard Shuttleworth's date of birth is October 1982.

Colonial Capital Group PLC. (Company Reg no. 08874920).

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[UK Statement to the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs](#)

As this is the first time that I have taken the floor in this initiative, let me start by thanking you for all the work you have done so expertly to shepherd this group towards consensus on a set of ambitious and wide-ranging proposals. Indeed, this initiative looks set to be one of the most successful outcomes of the next Ministerial Conference in June.

Sitting here in Geneva, it is sometimes easy to get swept-up in the granular detail of technical and complex negotiations. But we should all occasionally take a step back in order not to lose sight of why we are all gathered in this building in the first place. That is, we are here to deliver benefits for businesses, consumers and citizens across the globe.

And, to do that properly, we have a duty to advance our countries' economies in their entirety – from the multinationals that employ hundreds of thousands right down to local businesses in small, isolated communities.

And, Mr Chair, I sit in Geneva representing a country where 99.9% of our companies are either a micro, small or medium-sized business.

These enterprises are responsible for employing over 17 million people in communities throughout every region of the UK, from the bustling heart of central London to the most rural of Scottish islands.

Combined, these businesses represent a £2.2 trillion turnover in the UK. They are also responsible for around one third of our exports in goods, and add over £100 billion to our economy every year.

And if you look across the globe, the UK is not an outlier; in fact, MSMEs represent 95% of businesses worldwide.

We all know that MSMEs face specific challenges in cross-border trade, and are particularly vulnerable to disruption and unpredictability. And therein lies the significance of the rules-based multilateral trading system, with transparency at its core.

So the objectives of this group complement the rest of the work being carried out in this institution aimed at agreeing and implementing rules to foster predictability, from the regular Committees to the other Joint Statement Initiatives on e-commerce, services and investment.

We are at a pivotal time in the evolution of this organisation, with the Membership focussed on how best to modernise the WTO, to make it fit for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. And, as a critical pillar of both modern-day global business and society, increased MSME access to the multilateral system will ensure that smaller businesses will be better represented within our collective strategy to fostering global trade.

So, from the initial commitment made in Argentina right through until today, the UK has been, and will remain, an exceedingly strong supporter of this work, as have leading MSME trade associations in the UK, such as the Federation of Small Businesses. We look forward to working with all Members to identify opportunities to realise the objectives of the Buenos Aires Declaration.

Now, as MC12 approaches, we have a very real and tangible deadline to work towards. I call upon Members to do all that we can to find consensus, with the objective of ensuring that the 95% of businesses we collectively represent are able to better access the global trading system. Looking beyond June, given the enthusiastic discussions on the future work programme, there is already real appetite and ambition within this group to take a longer-term look at what more we can do to support our small businesses – so we are, in fact, only at the beginning of a new chapter.

So, working together with the other Members here today, the UK looks forward to joining the group in consensus at MC12, on a shared vision of how together

we can better integrate micro, small and medium-sized businesses into the multilateral system.

Thank you, Chair.

[North West London restaurateur banned for under-declaring income](#)

JJ Timisoreana Limited was incorporated in October 2014 and Mihaela Solga (50), from Edgware, North West London, was appointed as the company's sole director.

The company traded as a restaurant known as Brasserie Timisoreana in Burnt Oak, North West London. Four years later, however, the restaurant experienced difficult trading conditions and the company entered into liquidation in October 2018.

Investigators from the Insolvency Service were made aware of JJ Timisoreana's failure and upon further enquiries, uncovered that the company's business records were incomplete in many instances.

It was soon discovered that Mihaela Solga, also known as Hussain or Sarpe, had caused JJ Timisoreana to under-declare the correct amount of tax between 2015 and 2018 and at the point of liquidation, owed the tax authorities more than £406,000.

On 23 January 2020, the Secretary of State accepted a disqualification undertaking from Mihaela Solga after she did not dispute that she caused inaccurate statutory returns to be submitted to the tax authorities on behalf of JJ Timisoreana Limited, by the deliberate suppression of sales income.

The ban is effective from 13 February 2020 after which Mihaela Solga is banned for 7 years from acting as a director or directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

Lawrence Zussman, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations for the Insolvency Service, said:

Mihaela Solga failed to take her responsibilities as a director seriously and deliberately caused the company behind her restaurant to not pay the correct amount of taxes as she was duty-bound to do so.

Much of the public service is funded by the correct amount of taxes being paid and Mihaela Solga's misconduct has resulted in her being

removed from the business environment for a substantial amount of time.

Mihaela Solga is from Edgware, North West London and her date of birth is April 1969.

JJ Timisoreana Limited (Company registration number: 09247108)

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[New push to improve outcomes for vulnerable children](#)

Vulnerable children in every school across the country will benefit from a dedicated school leader to ensure they attend and achieve, under new plans published today.

A consultation launched today will introduce changes to the role of Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools so that they have a greater focus on improving the academic achievement of children on the edge of care, as part of their existing safeguarding duties.

The proposals will specifically help children that experience challenges outside of school, which may contribute to poor attendance, poor behaviour and disengagement in lessons. This includes sharing information about how children's circumstances are impacting on their education and supporting school staff to find effective ways of teaching these children and maintaining a culture of high aspiration for them.

The plans come in response to recommendations from the Children in Need [review](#), and are aimed at helping the 1.6 million children who have needed help and protection from a social worker at some point in the last six years. These children have worse outcomes than their peers, and often miss out on education, being three times more likely to be persistently absent from school and two to four times more likely to be permanently excluded.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

We know that on average, three children in every classroom need a

social worker. We also know that far too many of those children fall behind, which is why I am determined to be ambitious for these children and ensure they are seen, safe and able to succeed.

Teachers and social workers are some of the most dedicated professionals in society, delivering for children up and down the country. But I do not want any child to slip through the cracks, which is why we are consulting on having a dedicated senior leader in schools to make sure schools know who their vulnerable children are, set high aspirations for them and put in place the right support so they can achieve.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is currently responsible for coordinating the safeguarding of children, making sure staff across a school understand signs of child abuse and neglect, as well as referring concerns to children's social care when appropriate.

The Department for Education will also be consulting on what is needed for Designated Safeguarding Leads to provide this help, in terms of resources, training and support, to be introduced from this September.

The changes come following a review last year, which revealed children who need a social worker have worse outcomes at every stage of their education which persist even after social care involvement has ended. Children who have needed help and protection from social care services are 50 per cent less likely to achieve a strong pass in English and maths GCSEs and on average two to four times more likely to be excluded than their peers.

Dr Sam Royston, Director of Policy and Research at The Children's Society, said:

Children who are on the edge of the care system can struggle at school as much as children in care, and it is fantastic to see the government recognise the importance of dedicated extra support to help them succeed academically. It's vital that this support focusses not only on their grades, but also on their well-being and personal development. This will require additional investment in the pupil premium so schools have resources to provide the right help. Support for vulnerable children mustn't stop the school gates and it's crucial that the underlying issues affecting their lives are addressed as well.