

Charity regulator opens inquiry into SPAC Nation

The Charity Commission has today announced the opening of a statutory inquiry into the charity SPAC Nation ([1152988](#)). The inquiry will examine financial, governance and safeguarding matters at the charity.

SPAC Nation is a charity set up to advance Christianity. Much of its charitable work is based in London, working particularly with young people.

SPAC Nation has been subject to a regulatory compliance case since April 2018, which was opened to examine safeguarding and financial concerns about the charity.

In June 2019, as part of the compliance case, the Commission issued the charity with an action plan, receiving as expected a response from the trustees in November 2019. Some of this information raised further concerns about the charity's financial controls, policy and procedures.

Of immediate concern to the Commission is that substantial amounts of charity money are held in cash. As a protective measure, the Commission has issued an order under Section 84 of the Charities Act, requiring the charity to bank its money.

The Commission is also concerned about the apparent lack of clarity between the personal, business and charity roles of leaders within the charity.

The national media reported on the charity over the autumn of 2019, when several individuals alleged they had been encouraged to give money to the charity and/or individuals connected to the charity by taking on personal debt.

The Commission has opened this inquiry to examine matters further. The inquiry will look into the charity's governance, its management and its policies and practices with regard to safeguarding and people protection issues, financial issues and risk management, particularly in relation to:

- Whether the charity's safeguarding practices are adequate and the extent to which the Charity's beneficiaries are being placed at risk;
- The extent to which the financial assets of the charity have been placed at risk by the charity operating largely outside of its current bank account and previously without a bank account;
- The extent to which the trustees are managing the risks, including reputational risks, to the charity caused by recent and ongoing negative publicity in relation to the charity.

The Commission may extend the scope of the inquiry if additional regulatory issues emerge. An inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrongdoing.

A Charity Commission spokesperson said:

Charities exist to improve lives and strengthen society; the issues that have been raised related to SPAC Nation in recent weeks are highly concerning, even more so as the allegations are entirely at odds with the expectations about the way that charities will operate. The opening of this inquiry is an important step that will allow us to examine these concerns further and establish the facts. We will seek to provide assurance to the public and the community that these matters will be considered fully and, where necessary, resolved.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were.

Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Ends.

Notes to Editors

1. The inquiry opened on 5 December 2019.
2. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales; our role is to regulate charity trustees' compliance with the charity law framework.
3. The Commission does not investigate criminal matters.

[Recognition of Imray Laurie Norie and Wilson as a chart producer](#)

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Mr Wataru Kuwahara honoured by The Queen



For fourteen years Mr Kuwahara led organisation of the Hankyu British Fair, introducing many new British companies and products to Japanese consumers over this time and steadily increasing the Fair's status and sales of British consumer goods. Through the Fair, many Japanese consumers have grown to love British products and culture and have had a chance to experience both modern and traditional Britain.

Mr Kuwahara's passionate advocacy of the British lifestyle and its diversity, including the incorporation of guest speakers and performances into the Fair and use of social media, expanded its reach, attracting visitors from across Japan and led to the creation of a second annual Fair in Fukuoka.

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British High Commission launches The Great Debate in Lahore

The competition featured 25 students from eight universities across Lahore. At the end of an intense competition, Mustafa Shaukat from Lahore University of Management Sciences was the winner and Muhammad Ali from Punjab University was the runner-up.

The GREAT Debate competition is taking place from December 2019 to March 2020 in six cities across Pakistan.

Fouzia Younis, Director of Communication at the British High Commission said:

Over the past five years, we have engaged over one thousand debaters and partnered with leading universities in 12 cities across Pakistan through our GREAT Debate competition.

The competition gives us an opportunity to celebrate our shared tradition of lively, reasoned debate as well as give students a platform to express their views and opinions about topics that matter to both Pakistan and the UK.

So it's only right that this year's debate theme is focused on the global impact of climate change, especially as the UK prepares to host a major UN summit on this important agenda in November 2020.

Prof. Dr. Asghar Zaidi, The Vice Chancellor of GCU, said:

The Great Debate is an excellent initiative by the British High Commission Pakistan, which provides the students with a wonderful opportunity to engage with various ideas pertaining to the socio-economic issues of Pakistan.

GC University Lahore takes pride in hosting this year's regional round in collaboration with the British High Commission. We are excited to join hands for this initiative and collaborate in order to develop a healthy culture of discourse, and to improve the quality of higher education in the country.

University students across Pakistan who are interested in debating and taking part in the GREAT Debate competition can register immediately by registering on Great Debate [website](#)

This is the fifth annual edition of the British High Commission's GREAT Debate competition. Since 2015, the competition has taken place across 15 universities and 12 cities in Pakistan. The previous winners of the GREAT Debate competition have included: Gaudhan Aslam from Forman Christian College in Lahore, Taha Ahmed from Aga Khan University in Karachi, Mohiba Ahmed and Haris Ali Virk from Government College University in Lahore.

Further information

The GREAT Debate is a debating competition for university students. There will be six events – in six different cities (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta and Faisalabad) involving students from leading universities across Pakistan – and the winner and runner-up of each round will compete in the final in Islamabad.

The winner and runner-up of the overall competition will receive a scholarship reward to contribute towards their tuition fees.

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Notes to editors

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Baroness Hooper in Argentina

[Baroness Gloria Hooper](#), Honorary President of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Latin America and a member of the House of Lords, visited Argentina from 8-12 December. The main purpose of the visit was to lead the UK delegation attending Alberto Fernández's inauguration ceremony.

During a meeting with foreign delegations at Casa Rosada on 10 December, Baroness Hooper conveyed to President Fernández the official greetings of the UK Government and handed him a letter from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The next day, Baroness Hooper, accompanied by Ambassador Mark Kent and by the Head of Political Affairs and Programmes, Emily Hourmouzios, met Foreign Minister Felipe Solá and other MFA officials to discuss the bilateral agenda and reaffirm the will to co-operate in different areas.

In addition, the Baroness took part in a number of activities and meetings where she came into contact with Argentine political, economic, social and cultural leaders. For instance, she met representatives of the Argentine Council for Foreign Relations (CARI) and the women leaders' group Pollera Pantalón; she also took part in a presentation on co-operation on science and technology between the Parliamentary offices of both countries, attended the launch of a new Argentine-British film production company (Infinity Hill) and visited the Tigre Art Museum.

Baroness Hooper at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship

Baroness Hooper at the British Residence

Baroness Hooper with the Pollera Pantalón group