

# Five year disqualification for Dundee scaffolding firm which compromised road safety

The Traffic Commissioner for Scotland, Claire Gilmore, has disqualified a Dundee based scaffolding company and its director for five years following the repeated unlawful use of a vehicle.

The industry regulator concluded AFS Scaffolding Ltd poses “a significant risk to road safety” and that director Ross Findlay “deliberately and repeatedly” operated a vehicle without the required operator’s licence.

Ms Gilmore’s decision follows a public inquiry into the business, which looked at the company’s illegal use of a vehicle before it was given an operator’s licence.

Businesses are required to hold a valid licence to run commercial vehicles over 3.5 tonnes and must meet certain standards to keep that licence.

AFS Scaffolding Ltd’s application for an operator licence was considered at an inquiry before the Deputy Traffic Commissioner for Scotland in February this year, following allegations that it had been using a vehicle unlawfully.

Mr Findlay gave assurances to the Deputy Commissioner that the unlawful use had been infrequent and happened as a result of error rather than a deliberate attempt to avoid the licensing regime. After considering the application in detail, the company was told it could start running vehicles on 29 March.

However, evidence subsequently gathered by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) revealed the company had actually continued to use the vehicle unlawfully before its operator’s licence came into force.

In evidence at the latest public inquiry, Mr Findlay said one of the journeys was an emergency job to stabilise someone’s chimney. He told the Deputy Traffic Commissioner that the vehicle in question had been parked up for lengthy period prior to the licence being granted, but inspections revealed it had travelled significant mileages. In fact, over 10,000km was recorded in the vehicle between 10 December 2018 and 25 March 2019, when the company did not have a licence.

Other concerns raised at the inquiry related to vehicle safety standards, including a vehicle that was not checked properly and sent out with a tyre worn below the legal limit. The defect was categorised as safety critical.

In a [written decision](#) following the inquiry, the Traffic Commissioner said she was unable to rely on the Mr Findlay’s evidence.

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## Office for Disability Issues becomes part of Equalities Hub

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) is leaving the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 1 November 2019. The newly created Disability Unit will join with the Race Disparities Unit and the Government Equalities Office to become part of the new Equalities Hub in the Cabinet Office.

The new cross-departmental disability team will bring the voices of disabled people into the heart of government. By working closely with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities to develop a new approach to disability, their views and experiences will be at the forefront of any new policy.

The new Disability Unit will continue to support the Office of the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health, Justin Tomlinson MP, which will remain part of DWP.

On 25 June 2019, the government launched a new cross-government approach on disability which is guided by a vision which recognises the contributions disabled people make and where disabled people can participate fully in society. This move into the Cabinet Office will enable vital, co-ordinated, cross-government action to tackle barriers faced by disabled people across the course of their lives and will enable the profile of disability issues to be raised.

Maintaining and building invaluable relationships with disabled people and their organisations, colleagues, stakeholders and partners, to improve the lives of all citizens will be a focus for the Disability Unit.

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## New population projection figures

# inform GAD's work

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) uses information from the national population projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for a variety of client work.

ONS has just published its [new 2018-based population projections](#). GAD will consider these to inform assumptions around our work, for example in modelling future contribution income and benefit outgoings of the National Insurance Fund. Other government departments use the projections for planning purposes and policy development

## **Population figures**

The ONS figures provide an overall indication of the future size and age structure of the UK and its constituent countries. The information, which is based on a set of assumptions of future fertility, mortality and migration, is central to much of GAD's work.

These latest figures predict an increase of 3 million people over the next 10 years, to 2028. It also anticipates around 1 in 5 people will be over the state pension age by the same year.

## **Mortality insights**

The projections are important for GAD when it comes to both public sector schemes and many of the other pension schemes that we advise.

Projected mortality rates are used to model future income and benefit outgo for public sector and other pension schemes we advise. The way these mortality rates are assumed to change over time is generally based on the rates of change from the population projections. Up to now GAD has been using the ONS 2016-based projections.

## **New projections**

GAD actuaries will consider the information underlying the 2018-based projections in reviewing our assumptions about future mortality rates. We'll also use this information in the next [Mortality Insights bulletin](#). This is published twice a year and provides succinct and accessible information on developments in the area of longevity research.

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# Tick-borne encephalitis virus detected in ticks in the UK

Tick-borne encephalitis virus (TBEV) has been detected for the first time in ticks in the UK. The findings are part of ongoing research by Public Health England (PHE) and the Emerging and Zoonotic Infections National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Protection Research Unit at the University of Liverpool.

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is an infection spread by tick bites and is endemic in mainland Europe and Scandinavia, as well as Asia.

Most people who catch TBE will not have any symptoms – though it can cause flu-like symptoms, and in a small number of cases can progress to more serious disease involving the central nervous system.

The virus has been detected in a small number of ticks in Thetford Forest and an area on the border between Hampshire and Dorset. Further work is under way to identify the distribution of TBEV infected tick populations.

Earlier this year a European visitor became ill after being bitten by a tick in the New Forest area. This is considered to be a highly probable case of tick borne encephalitis (TBE). The patient, who was reported to PHE through the European Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), has since made a full recovery.

To date, no other cases of TBE considered likely to have been acquired in the UK have been identified. The risk from TBEV is currently assessed as very low for the general population.

Dr Nick Phin, Deputy Director, National Infections Service, Public Health England, said:

Tick-borne encephalitis virus, which is endemic in many European countries, has been found for the first time in a very small number of ticks in 2 locations in England. These are early research findings and indicate the need for further work, however, the risk to the general public is currently assessed to be very low.

Ticks carry a number of infections including Lyme disease, so we are reminding people to be 'tick aware' and take tick precautions, particularly when visiting or working in areas with long grass such as woodlands, moorlands and parks.

Contact your GP or dial 111 if you begin to feel unwell with flu-like symptoms following a tick bite.

Lyme disease remains the most common tick borne infection in the UK, and the

risk of acquiring Lyme substantially outweighs that of acquiring TBEV.

Ticks are found throughout the year – but are most active between spring and autumn.

[Tick bite risks and prevention of lyme disease](#) contains advice on tick avoidance measures for the public.

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## **New review will enhance response to serious and organised crime**

A new drive to crack down on all forms of serious and organised crime will begin today with the launch of a wide-ranging formal review.

It will look to identify ways of bolstering the response to threats such as county lines, people trafficking, drugs, child sexual exploitation, fraud and illicit finance.

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA), which is the lead law enforcement agency for tackling this threat, there are more than 4,500 serious and organised crime groups in the UK and this type of crime costs the economy an estimated £37 billion a year.

These criminals exploit the most vulnerable people in society for their own financial gain, from victims of modern slavery and human trafficking to young people suffering sexual exploitation and abuse.

The review – the first of its type to look at the full spectrum of serious and organised crime – will be led by Sir Craig Mackey QPM, former deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, with support from stakeholders and advisors from law enforcement and national security.

The review will consider the powers, capabilities, governance and funding required to tackle today's threats across law enforcement and the justice system in England and Wales – including the NCA, local police forces and regional organised crime units.

Sir Craig will deliver the report to Brandon Lewis, Minister for Security, in Spring 2020. His recommendations will cover the status, roles and responsibilities of the NCA, regional organised crime units, and other national agencies pursuing serious criminality, along with local police forces in England and Wales, to ensure they have the right governance, support and legal powers to deliver on their missions.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This review will help strengthen our response to these sickening crimes, building on the existing success of the NCA.

The threat is growing, and offenders are becoming more sophisticated. Serious and organised criminals exploit children and ruthlessly target the most vulnerable in our society, ruining lives and blighting communities.

We are committed to tackling crime and keeping our streets safe and I'm glad Sir Craig will bring his significant expertise and experience to this review, which will help ensure our system is fit for the modern world.

Minister for Security Brandon Lewis said:

This ambitious review will ensure that the NCA and the police have the right tools, leadership and funding to improve our national response to serious and organised crime.

This is a complex problem. Fraudsters, county lines gangs and child abusers all prey on the vulnerable and we must do more to tackle these nefarious activities. The NCA and police have my full and continued support in the excellent work that they do to combat these evildoers.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, said:

Serious and organised crime is a growing, sophisticated threat we are determined to tackle by bolstering our response.

In addition, I was proud to fund the first of our 20,000 new police officers at the Spending Round to help keep the public safe.

The review will support the implementation of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, published in November 2018, which sets out measures to build the UK's defences against this type of crime, track down the most dangerous and determined criminals and bring them to justice.

A total of £90 million was allocated from the police funding settlement over the course of 2019-20 to build capabilities at national, regional and local levels to tackle serious and organised crime. An additional £30m of new funding is helping to tackle child sexual exploitation. Meanwhile, 20,000 new police officers are being recruited to help make our streets safer.

Sir Craig Mackey said:

Serious and organised crime includes some of the worst offences that people can perpetrate against each other and corrodes our

communities.

It is a privilege to be asked by the Government to consider how we might improve the response to this.

I am looking forward to engaging with the professionals across the system who work tirelessly to keep us safe from these criminals to understand how we might enable them to do even more to protect the public and bring criminals to justice.