

CMA provisionally finds illegal price-fixing of Rangers FC merchandise

If confirmed, the companies involved can expect to face fines.

The provisional findings are:

- Elite Sports and JD Sports fixed the retail prices of a number of Rangers-branded replica kits and other clothing products from September 2018 until at least July 2019.
- Rangers FC also took part in the alleged collusion but only to the extent of fixing the retail price of adult home short-sleeved replica shirts from September 2018 to at least mid-November 2018. All 3 parties allegedly colluded to stop JD Sports undercutting the retail price of the shirt on Elite's Gers Online store.

At the time, Elite was the manufacturer of Rangers-branded clothing and also sold Rangers-branded products directly through Gers Online Store and later in bricks-and-mortar shops in Glasgow and Belfast. The only UK-wide major retailer selling those products at the time was JD Sports.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) alleges that Rangers FC became concerned about the fact that, at the start of the 2018-19 football season, JD Sports was selling the Rangers replica top at a lower price than Elite, which was seen at the time as the club's 'retail partner'. This resulted in an understanding between the 3 parties that JD Sports would increase its retail price of the Rangers adult short-sleeved home replica shirt by nearly 10%, from £55 to £60, to bring it in line with the prices being charged by Elite on Gers Online.

The CMA is also concerned that Elite and JD Sports – without involvement from Rangers – colluded to fix the retail prices of Rangers-branded clothing, including training wear and replica kit, over a longer period. This included aligning the level and timing of discounts towards the end of the football season in 2019, to avoid competition between them and protect their profit margins at the expense of fans.

Elite and JD Sports applied for leniency during the CMA's investigation and confessed to cartel activity. Provided they continue to cooperate with the investigation, each will receive a reduction on any financial penalties the CMA may decide to impose. Any business found to have infringed the prohibitions in the Competition Act 1998 can be fined up to 10% of its annual worldwide group turnover.

Michael Grenfell, Executive Director of Enforcement at the CMA, said:

We don't hesitate to take action when we have concerns that companies may be working together to keep costs up.

Football fans are well-known for their loyalty towards their teams. We are concerned that, in this case, Elite, JD Sports and, to some extent, Rangers, may have colluded to keep prices high, so that the 2 retailers could pocket more money for themselves at the expense of fans.

These are the CMA's provisional findings and the companies involved now have the chance to make representations to the CMA before it reaches a final decision.

More information can be found on the case page: [Suspected anti-competitive behaviour in relation to the pricing of Rangers FC-branded replica football kit](#).

Notes to editors:

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. The Chapter I prohibition in the Competition Act 1998 prohibits agreements and concerted practices between businesses which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the UK.
3. The statement of objections is addressed to the following parties: Elite Sports Group Limited and its parent company Elite Corporation Limited; JD Sports Fashion Plc; and The Rangers Football Club Limited and its parent company Rangers International Football Club Plc.
4. A statement of objections gives parties notice of a proposed infringement decision under the Competition Act 1998. It is a provisional decision only and does not necessarily lead to an infringement decision. Parties have the opportunity to make written and oral representations on the matters set out in the statement of objections. Any such representations will be considered by the CMA before a final decision is made. The final decision will be taken by a case decision group, which is separate from the investigation team and was not involved in the decision to issue the statement of objections.
5. The statement of objections will not be published. However, any person who in the CMA's view is directly and materially affected by the outcome of the CMA's investigation and is likely materially to assist the CMA in its investigation may request a non-confidential version of the statement of objections by contacting the CMA.
6. Under the CMA's leniency policy, a business that has been involved in a

cartel may be granted immunity from penalties or a significant reduction in penalty in return for reporting cartel activity and assisting the CMA with its investigation. Individuals involved in cartel activity may also in certain defined circumstances be granted immunity from criminal prosecution for the cartel offence under the Enterprise Act 2002 and from competition disqualification proceedings. The CMA also operates a rewards policy under which it may pay a financial reward of up to £100,000 in return for information which helps it to identify and take action against cartels. For more information on the CMA's leniency and informant reward policies, go to [leniency](#) and [rewards](#).

7. Anyone who has information about a cartel is encouraged to call the CMA cartels hotline on 020 3738 6888 or email cartelshotline@cma.gov.uk.

[Her Majesty's Ambassador to Libya announces the official reopening of the British Embassy in Tripoli at the Queen's Birthday Party](#)

- On Sunday 5 June, the British Embassy Tripoli hosted a Queen's Birthday Party in celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Her Majesty the Queen is the first monarch to celebrate 70 years of service to the UK and the Commonwealth.
- During the event, Her Majesty's Ambassador, Caroline Hurndall raised the Union Flag to reopen formally the British Embassy in Tripoli, closed since 2014.
- This was also the British Embassy Tripoli's first Queen's Birthday Party in eight years. The British Embassy Tripoli planted an olive tree in the Embassy gardens as part of [The Queen's Green Canopy](#).

Her Majesty the Queen has a historic and personal connection to Libya. The Queen's second ever-state visit was to Tobruk, where she visited the War Cemetery commemorating British and Commonwealth soldiers who fought and died in North Africa in the Second World War. There she met Libya's former King, Idris, who invested upon Her the Order of Idris the First. This represented an important step in a vibrant and enduring relationship between our two countries.

At the first QBP in Libya since 2014, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Libya, Caroline Hurndall, formally re-opened the British Embassy in Tripoli, which had been closed since that year. The reopening of the Embassy underlines the UK's continuing commitment to develop closer cooperation with Libya and to

work with Libyans and the UN towards a durable political settlement for Libya.

Her Majesty's Ambassador to Libya said:

Although the Embassy is based in Tripoli, this is a demonstration of our commitment to the whole of Libya. I am proud that our work touches the lives of Libyans across the whole country.

If Libya is to fulfil her political and economic potential, Libya's leaders must continue to implement the October Ceasefire Agreement, and work together to pursue compromise and cooperation. The people of Libya deserve this.

A wide range of guests attended – including government officials, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, representatives of other embassies, and members of Libya's vibrant business and civic communities – to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the reopening of the British Embassy in Tripoli, and the work of the British Embassy throughout Libya.

HMA Caroline Hurndall raising the Union Flag

The British Embassy in Tripoli's work across Libya includes:

- working with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya to in facilitate an inclusive political process
- supporting the High National Election Commission to help prepare Libya for successful elections
- working with the Peaceful Change Initiative to facilitate local level peacebuilding processes across the whole country, including Ajdibaya, Tobruk and Zliten
- supporting Free Fields Foundation and HALO in clearing contaminated areas of explosive remnants of war in Tripoli, Sirte and Benghazi, reducing the impact of conflict on the lives of Libyans
- training and mentoring delivered by UK policing and law enforcement experts to Libyan officers from Benghazi, Sebha, Misrata, and Tripoli, enabling Libyan law enforcement to dismantle terrorist networks
- working with British businesses to access opportunities with partners across Libya in sectors ranging from pharmaceuticals to financial services to energy transition
- helping Libyan teachers of English, facilitating access to international learning, and supporting cultural connections through the British Council, enabling Libyans to engage in the world

Her Majesty's Ambassador to Libya announcing the official reopening of the British Embassy in Tripoli, Libya.

Further information

Read [Her Majesty's Ambassador to Libya's speech](#).

The Queen's Birthday Party is celebrated by British Embassies and High Commissions around the world.

Read more information on [Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee](#).

Contact BritishEmbassy.Tripoli@fcdo.gov.uk.

Follow the British Embassy in Tripoli on [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

Follow Her Majesty's Ambassador on [Twitter](#).

[Patients to have earlier access to cutting-edge treatments on NHS](#)

- £340 million has been made available to purchase potentially life-saving drugs early
- It builds on the success of the Cancer Drugs Fund which has given tens of thousands of patients access to revolutionary treatments quickly
- Improving access to treatment for patients most in need could alleviate pressure on the NHS, helping bust the Covid backlog

NHS patients in England will have early access to potentially life-saving and cutting-edge treatments thanks to a new fund which has launched today.

Up to £340 million has been made available through the Innovative Medicines Fund to purchase the most promising medicines and fast-track them to patients to give adults and children the best chances of survival, recovery or a healthier, longer life.

The fund, which meets a manifesto commitment, will further support NHS England in offering patients potentially transformative new drugs while further real-world evidence is collected to inform a final decision by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on whether the treatment is clinically and cost effective and a good use of taxpayer money in the long-term, reducing delays and boosting patient outcomes in the interim.

Examples of previous medicines which patients have accessed in a similar way

through managed access agreements include a treatment for children with [spinal muscular atrophy](#) and a treatment to slow the progression of [a life-limiting metabolic disorder](#).

It builds on the success of the reformed Cancer Drugs Fund which, in the past five years, has provided more than 80,000 people access to life-extending or potentially life-saving drugs which might otherwise not have been available for years.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

I want NHS patients to be the first in the world to access the most promising and revolutionary treatments that could extend or save their lives.

The launch of the Innovative Medicines Fund delivers another manifesto pledge and will fast-track cutting-edge medicines to adults and children to give people renewed hope for a better future.

A total of £680 million has been ringfenced for the Innovative Medicines Fund and Cancer Drugs Fund – £340 million each – to fast-track medicines to NHS patients.

An estimated one in 17 people in England will be affected by a rare disease in their lifetime. The Innovative Medicines Fund will provide quick access to novel treatments, including potentially lifesaving gene therapies for serious conditions with few treatment options. It often takes longer for pharmaceutical companies to collect data on a medicine's clinical and cost effectiveness for rare diseases due to the smaller patient cohort. Rather than making patient's wait until this data is available, this new scheme will allow access while this important process takes place, with support from NHSE and NICE.

NHS Commercial Medicines Director, Blake Dark, said:

The NHS continues to be a pioneer in striking deals and rolling out the latest cutting-edge drugs and treatments. This new Innovative Medicines Fund will build on the success of the Cancer Drugs Fund, enabling more patients to benefit from early access to the most promising cancer and non-cancer medicines.

The NHS Long Term Plan shows we are committed to adopting NICE approved treatments at the earliest opportunity and £680 million of ringfenced funding will help provide faster access to promising new drugs and ensure the NHS remains at the forefront of securing the best revolutionary treatments for patients.

It is hoped improving access to treatment for those patients most in need

will help alleviate pressure on the NHS, supporting wider efforts to tackle the Covid backlog.

All medicines deployed through the Innovative Medicines Fund and Cancer Drugs Fund will have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) after meeting high standards of safety and quality and will have been recommended as suitable for the IMF by NICE.

Chief executive of NICE Dr Samantha Roberts said:

I am delighted that NICE has been able to play a key role, alongside NHS England and NHS Improvement, to create this important new initiative to give people earlier and faster access to promising new innovations in treatment.

This fund, like the Cancer Drugs Fund, will help us more quickly identify and make available transformational new treatments that will bring real benefits to thousands of people and offer high value to the NHS.

The Innovative Medicines Fund supports the government's [Rare Diseases Action Plan](#) to ensure people living with rare conditions benefit from faster diagnosis, treatments and support to manage their conditions.

Following a public call for evidence, the government is also developing a 10-Year Cancer Plan to make England a world-leader in cancer care, with renewed attention paid to innovative treatment and early diagnosis to improve outcomes for patients.

Notes to editors

- As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England's Commercial Medicines Directorate has used its commercial capabilities to secure access to several innovative medicines for NHS patients, including many 'world-first' or 'first in Europe' drug deals.
- Some of the most successful treatments which have been rolled out through the Cancer Drugs Fund include:
- CAR-T therapy – children and adults in the UK were among the first in Europe to benefit from this [innovative gene therapy](#). It has now been approved by NICE and is available at 13 NHS hospitals across England.
- Larotrectinib (Vitrakvi) – [a cancer treatment for children](#), young people and some adults which targets tumours according to their genetic make-up, rather than where they originated from in the body.

- Kisqali (ribociclib) – [a breast cancer drug](#) that was available through the Cancer Drugs Fund and is now routinely funded, potentially benefitting up to 3,300 women
 - Further information on England’s Rare Disease Action plan is available [here](#).
 - Further information on the 10-Year Cancer Plan is available [here](#).
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[New non-fatal strangulation offence comes into force](#)

- perpetrators face up to 5 years in prison
- new protections for rape victims now in 37 courts across England and Wales
- part of government action to better protect women and girls

Non-fatal strangulation was made a specific offence as part of the government’s landmark Domestic Abuse Act. The practice typically involves a perpetrator strangling or intentionally affecting their victim’s ability to breathe in an attempt to control or intimidate them.

It followed concerns that perpetrators were avoiding punishment as the act can often leave no visible injury, making it harder to prosecute under existing offences such as Actual Bodily Harm (ABH). [Studies](#) have shown that victims are seven times more likely to be murdered by their partner if there had been non-fatal strangulation beforehand.

The new offence will also apply to British nationals abroad. It means perpetrators can be prosecuted in England and Wales for offences committed overseas – ensuring there is no escape for abusers.

It comes as even more victims of rape will be spared the trauma of being cross-examined in court during a live trial, with the extension of special measures schemes. A further 11 Crown Courts across the Midlands and the South West will now be able to provide victims the chance to pre-record their evidence before their case gets to trial, subject to a successful application to the court.

The scheme, which has already been introduced successfully in 26 Crown Courts, allows victims and witnesses of crimes such as rape and modern slavery to have their cross-examination video-recorded and played back later during trial.

The recording takes place as close to the time of the offence as possible, while memories remain fresh, and helps victims avoid the stress of giving evidence in a trial setting, which many find traumatic.

Minister for Tackling Violence against Women and Girls, Victoria Atkins MP said:

This government is determined to tackle abuse in its many forms, make our streets safer and better protect women and girls which is why perpetrators who strangle their partners in this way will now face up to five years behind bars for the torment they have inflicted.

We're also rolling pre-recorded cross-examination for victims of rape to more Crown courts – helping to minimise stress to ensure they can provide the best possible evidence.

These measures are part of our plan to ensure victims get the support and justice they deserve, alongside introducing a new Victims law, launching a 24/7 rape helpline, recruiting more independent sexual violence advisers and improving collaboration between police and prosecutors.

From Thursday 9 June 2022 pre-recorded cross-examination will be available immediately at Crown Courts in:

- Warwick
- Shrewsbury
- Stafford
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Worcester
- Hereford
- Nottingham
- Lincoln
- Leicester
- Northampton
- Taunton

This extension means it is now available for victims of rape at nearly half of all Crown Courts (37), with the government committed to rolling it out nationwide by September 2022.

The move follows the successful implementation of a similar scheme for vulnerable victims, such as children or those who have limited mental capacity, to all Crown Courts in England and Wales – with more than 2,500 witnesses having already benefitted from the technology since August 2020.

The measure is designed to maintain a defendant's right to a fair trial and any decision to pre-record evidence is made by a judge on a case-by case basis.

Steve Witheyman, service manager at Sexual Trauma and Abuse Restorative Therapies (START) in Hampshire, where the measure was rolled out last month, said:

The value of pre-recorded evidence for victims and survivors of sexual trauma is massive as it offers protection from a real and often damaging re-traumatisation and rerun of past events and unwanted experiences.

It is a huge leap forward in the criminal justice system and a significant mindset change where truly supporting a victim becomes a key component in the whole process and will undoubtedly encourage more victims to report sexual crime in the future.

Today's announcement builds on recent government action to make our streets safer and increase confidence in the justice system including the publication of a draft Victims Bill. The legislation seeks to amplify victims' voices, and places greater accountability on agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police for the service they provide to them.

The reforms come as Ministers continue to drive improvements for victims, in particular those of rape and sexual offences, for which convictions rose 27 percent last year compared to before the pandemic.

In March the government announced that victim support services would receive £440 million in grant funding over the next 3 years, helping to fund more than 1,000 Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors and a 24/7 rape crisis helpline.

Notes to editors

Non-Fatal Strangulation

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends the Serious Crime Act 2015, introducing 2 new sections – section 75A and 75B– which will create a new and specific criminal offence of non-fatal strangulation and suffocation.
- Appropriate guidance, training and publicity has been developed to ensure the effectiveness of the offence from the outset. The CPS and the College of Policing are preparing specific guidance for prosecutors and the police on non-fatal strangulation. It is important for these organisations to have guidance given their key roles in the arrest, charge and prosecution of perpetrators who are responsible for this type of criminal behaviour.
- The offence will apply to any case where a person intentionally strangles or suffocates another person, including in cases of domestic abuse.
- The offence applies in England and Wales.
- The offence will also apply where strangulation or suffocation is committed abroad by a British national or by a person who is habitually

resident in England or Wales, as if the offence had happened in England and Wales.

Pre-Recorded Evidence (known as section 28)

Government takes action to ensure Scotland receives best possible HS2 service

- government commits to finding best solution to take HS2 trains to Scotland as it confirms intention to remove Golborne Link from HS2 Bill
- government will explore alternatives that deliver similar benefits, within the £96 billion envelope of the Integrated Rail Plan
- this follows recommendations in the independent Union Connectivity Review and comes as HS2 Bill moves towards its second reading

The government has today (6 June 2022) committed to leaving no stone unturned when it comes to finding the right solution to take HS2 trains to Scotland.

The Department for Transport has announced its intention to remove the Golborne Link from the current HS2 Bill and explore alternatives that deliver similar benefits, within the £96 billion envelope of the [Integrated Rail Plan](#).

The Golborne Link – a high speed rail link connecting HS2 to the West Coast Mainline – will, subject to Parliamentary, be removed from the [High Speed Rail \(Crewe – Manchester\) Bill](#) after its second reading following clear recommendations set out in last year's [Union Connectivity Review](#).

The government is updating safeguarding boundaries to align with the HS2 Bill, but will maintain safeguarding for the Golborne Link during the work on possible alternatives – meaning impacted residents and small businesses can continue to apply under the property compensation schemes.

The independent Union Connectivity Review undertaken by Sir Peter Hendy claimed that the Golborne Link does not resolve all the current capacity constraints on the West Coast Main Line between Crewe and Preston.

In line with this review, the government has committed to exploring a number of alternatives that could deliver similar benefits within the framework of the Integrated Rail Plan – ranging from upgrading existing infrastructure to brand new high speed links.

Scotland is already set to benefit from the boost in connectivity and huge economic benefits HS2 will bring with services between London and Glasgow set

to be available, based on current timetable assumptions, once HS2 trains start running onto the conventional rail network.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said:

HS2 is a once-in-a-lifetime project that will transform travel across the entire UK as we know it and serve millions of people for hundreds of years to come and it's absolutely vital that we get this right from the outset.

Removing this link is about ensuring that we've left no stone unturned when it comes to working with our Scottish counterparts to find a solution that will best serve the great people of Scotland.

The Union Connectivity review recommended a full exploration of alternative options to the Golborne Link and the UK government is working with the Scottish Government and other devolved authorities to implement recommendations from it.

This is just one part of the £96 billion Integrated Rail Plan – the biggest ever public investment in Britain's rail network – and the first of 3 new high speed lines being planned, to add more seats, shorten journey times, support local services and deliver a modern, fully connected transport network.

The High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill was introduced in January with the goal of bringing faster, greener and more reliable train services as well unparalleled economic benefits to the north and will have its second reading when parliamentary time allows.