

Press release: Foreign Secretary calls for urgent action from Venezuelan government

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Venezuela stands on the brink of disaster and Nicholas Maduro's government must stop before it is too late. The country is turning on itself – more than 100 have died already – and democracy and basic rights are in jeopardy. The dubious Constituent Assembly vote has dramatically deepened the problems and ramped up tensions. It is time for the government to see sense and start working with the opposition on a way forward that brings the people of Venezuela back together.

Further information

News story: Keeping Kids Company

A spokesperson for the Insolvency Service said:

We can confirm that the Insolvency Service has written to the former directors of Keeping Kids Company informing them that the Business Secretary intends to bring proceedings to have them disqualified from running or controlling companies for periods of between two-and-a-half and six years.

As this matter will now be tested in the Court it is not appropriate to comment further.

- The intention to bring disqualification proceedings follow an investigation by the Insolvency Service, an executive agency of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- The proceedings will name all nine former directors; Sunetra Devi Atkinson, Erica Jane Bolton, Richard Gordonn Handover, Vincent Gerald O'Brien, Francesca Mary Robinson, Jane Tyler, Andrew Webster and Alan Yentob. The former chief executive Camila Batmanghelidjh was not formally a director at the time the charity collapsed, however the

proceedings will allege that she acted as a de facto director and should therefore also be disqualified from running or controlling other companies

Press release: Ban for further director of Manchester financial advisory business

An investigation by the Insolvency Service found that Mr Sharma 31, of Hale, caused funds totalling £42,920 to be transferred to the company's current account, of which at least £25,929 was paid to another company controlled by Rahul Sharma, and individuals connected to him. Mr Sharma's nine year disqualification commenced on 3 July 2017 and will end in July 2026.

Debt Connect was supposed to look after the interests of clients who were in financial difficulties. However Investigators found that during the time when Rahul Sharma was directing the company, Debt Connect did not make all payments due to clients' creditors, including printed cheques not posted out totalling £32,465 which were in a box delivered up to the liquidators, nor did it pay refunds due to clients of at least £9,267.

In addition, Debt Connect had lost its Consumer Credit Licence and been instructed by a Tribunal to return payments received from clients which would not be distributed to their creditors.

Earlier:

- Rajiv Sharma, 58, of Whitefield, Manchester, signed an eleven year disqualification in which he did not dispute that he acted as a director of Debt Connect between at least October 2013 and October 2014 whilst he was already subject to disqualification. His disqualification in relation to Debt Connect commenced on 10 November 2016, and runs until November 2027
- Stephen Bradbury, 60, of Darwen, Lancashire, signed a four year disqualification undertaking. He had been appointed as a director of Debt Connect in October 2013 but abrogated his responsibilities by taking no active role in the company, other than to sign paperwork when instructed by others. This allowed Rahul Sharma to make some of the illegitimate payments. Mr Bradbury's disqualification began on 26 October 2016

Commenting on the disqualifications, Robert Clarke, Investigations Group Leader at The Insolvency Service, said:

Debt Connect's customers were vulnerable individuals who had already experienced financial difficulties and had turned to a debt management company with the expectation that the resolution of their problems would be paramount.

However, there were serious failings within the company; Rahul Sharma failed to ensure all payments were made to clients' creditors and defied a clear Tribunal instruction, and Rajiv Sharma blatantly ignored his existing disqualification. The lengthy bans these men have accepted are wholly justified.

Also, directors such as Mr Bradbury should know that failing to play their part in directing a company is unacceptable, and the Insolvency Service will pursue this as a matter of misconduct.

Notes to editors

Rajiv Sharma was registered with Companies House as a director of Debt Connect (UK) Ltd (company number 04296391) between 15 October 2007 and 1 November 2011. He was disqualified from acting as a director or being concerned in the promotion, formation or management of a company for 6 years from 13 March 2012.

Mr Sharma did not obtain leave of the court when he acted as a director of Debt Connect between at least 31 October 2013 and 28 October 2014.

Rahul Sharma was appointed as a director of Debt Connect between 31 October 2011 and 31 October 2013, although evidence gathered by investigators established that Rahul Sharma continued to act as a director of the company until at least 16 December 2013.

Companies House records show that Stephen Bradbury was appointed as a director of Debt Connect on 31 October 2013, and remained so appointed until the company went into Liquidation.

Debt Connect was incorporated on 01 October 2001. From around March 2009 the company traded from No. 2 Universal Square, Devonshire Street North, Manchester M12 6JH.

When Debt Connect went into Liquidation on 28 October 2014, the company disclosed assets estimated to realise £1,000, and liabilities to creditors of £157,842.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or

- management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures. Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[News story: Britain remembers the heroes of Passchendaele with community ceremonies](#)

Forty-three brave British soldiers will be remembered in special ceremonies, 100 years to the day after they were awarded the Victoria Cross (VC).

Starting on 31 July 2017 until 10 November 2017, these events will honour them for their acts of valour at the Battle of Passchendaele, the soldiers' name for the Third Battle of Ypres.

Fourteen VCs – the nation's highest military honour – were awarded in recognition of the action on the first day of the campaign, more than on any other single day in the First World War. On Monday 31 July 2017, communities across England, Scotland and Wales will come together to honour their home town heroes with a commemorative paving stone laid in their memory.

Comprising 8 separate battles, beginning with the Battle of Pilckem, the 3 month campaign for the control of the ridges to the south and east of Ypres, West Flanders, was to claim the lives of between 240,000-275,000 British and Allied soldiers.

Lord Bourne, Minister for Faith, said:

From private soldiers to Brigadier Generals, Passchendaele saw acts of outstanding courage displayed by exceptional men from all ranks and backgrounds.

Those fighting endured unimaginable hardship from the endless shelling to the torrential rain and mud. To simply survive what the great war poet Siegfried Sassoon described as 'hell' was heroic.

It remains vitally important that we remember their sacrifice. So these stones being laid across the country over the coming months will provide a lasting legacy to these brave men.

British soldiers did not fight alone. Together with Belgian and French forces they were joined by soldiers from Australia, Canada, India, pre-partition Ireland, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa.

A further 18 VCs were awarded to soldiers from Canada, Ireland and South Africa. Those overseas-born soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross, including at the Battle of Passchendaele are honoured with a permanent memorial at the [National Memorial Arboretum](#) in Staffordshire, which was unveiled in 2015.

The majority of the Victoria Crosses were awarded for 'offensive' acts, bold raids on fortified farms and enemy posts. However Passchendaele also saw awards for the saving of lives.

Captain Noel Chavasse, a medical officer with the Liverpool Scottish regiment known to his comrades as the 'doc' became the most highly decorated soldier of the First World War when he received a posthumous second Victoria Cross for his actions at Wieltje, Belgium.

His citation in the London Gazette, September 1917 reads: 'By his extraordinary energy and inspiring example was instrumental in rescuing many wounded who would have otherwise undoubtedly succumbed under the bad weather conditions. This devoted and gallant officer subsequently died of his wounds'.

Not only was he awarded the Victoria Cross twice, Chavasse was also earlier awarded the Military Cross for action at Bellewaarde near Ypres, Belgium, on 16 June 1915 following his regiment's first serious battle. More than 1,000 men had died and he spent 12 hours helping to treat and rescue the injured in No Man's Land. Following his actions at Bellewaarde, in June 1916 he was later promoted to Captain.

The story of Noel Chavasse is a remarkable one. Not only did he gain a First-

Class Honours degree in philosophy from Oxford, but as a young man he also ran for Great Britain alongside his identical twin brother in the 1908 Olympics. He later studied medicine, joining the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1913, going to France as a Surgeon-Lieutenant when the war broke out. He was one of the first doctors to use a new anti-tetanus serum and when the Germans began using chlorine gas for the first time he arranged for his father to send a gramophone to raise morale.

A commemorative paving stone will be unveiled at Abercromby Square, Liverpool on Tuesday 29 August 2017, followed by a re-creation of his Memorial Service at Liverpool Parish Church, a century to the day after it took place.

Noel Chavasse's Victoria Cross medals will also go on public display at the Museum of Liverpool from 31 July 2017. To mark the Passchendaele centenary, DCLG is also working with the Big Ideas Company on a new research-and-remember project for schools and communities called Passchendaele at Home. The project is a challenge to discover the graves that belong to British soldiers who were brought back to the UK for hospital treatment but went on to die of their wounds in this country.

There is no central register of their graves. Through the project, previously unknown local history will be uncovered and the lives of extraordinary soldiers will be remembered within local communities. For more information including a Passchendaele at Home 'Action Map' – an A1 Poster designed by leading graphic artist Nick Hayes giving a step-by-step guide to research and also potential funding for local research projects see: Passchendaele at Home or contact the Big Ideas Company athome@bigideascompany.org.

1. As part of the government's First World War Centenary Programme, the Department for Communities and Local Government launched the campaign to remember and honour all those awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War with a commemorative paving stone.
2. There were 627 individuals who received the VC during the First World War, although in total 628 VC's were awarded. This is because Noel Chavasse, was awarded the VC twice during the First World War. Of these individuals, 361 were born in England, 70 were born in Scotland and 16 were born in Wales. 35 were born in pre-partition Ireland and 145 were born in other countries overseas.
3. The design of the stones was selected from a public competition and includes the name of the soldier and regiment, along with the marking of the Victoria Cross. They are made of Scoutmoor Yorkstone, a hard-wearing British stone that is quarried near Ramsbottom and are sited in locations visible to the public to inspire viewers to 'pause and remember'.
4. Although, there are no set guidelines, it is widely accepted that each VC recipient must have undergone a 90% risk of death as a result of

their actions.

5. You can also follow the laying of the commemorative stones on Twitter [#VCpavingstones](#).

News story: Farmers and vets gain easy access to cattle disease information

Following the successful launch of the [sheep disease surveillance dashboard](#) in June, APHA has now launched a new [cattle disease surveillance dashboard](#).

It displays diseases diagnosed in cattle across Great Britain and contains all the same useful features as the sheep dashboard, with the addition of being able to select dairy or beef.

A map is used to allow selection of diseases by county, country or across GB and filters can also be used to show diagnoses by time period and age group of cattle.

Farmers and vets can now quickly and easily access information on the most common diagnoses in an area, or learn where specific diseases have been diagnosed. Once a view has been selected, it can be downloaded as an image to use in a document or presentation.

The data behind the dashboards are derived from diagnoses made by APHA's Veterinary Investigation Centres (VICs) across England and Wales, from the network of universities and other surveillance partners working with APHA, and from Scotland's Rural College Disease Surveillance Centres in Scotland operated by SAC Consulting Veterinary Services.

For further information on the ruminant disease surveillance dashboards, see the [APHA Vet Gateway](#).

An avian dashboard, a dashboard for pigs and another for wildlife will be available over the coming months.

APHA has also refreshed the surveillance and diagnostics web pages on its [Vet Gateway](#). They provide a wealth of easily accessible information on the diagnostic and post-mortem services network provided by APHA and its partners.

To find out more contact your nearest [APHA's Veterinary Investigation Centres](#).