

Leicester revenge arsonist has sentence increased

A man who lit a series of fires in a revenge arson attack has had his sentence increased under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

In December 2017 Darren Finnemore, 49, was subject to a police enquiry, and sought revenge in January 2018 against those he considered responsible for the investigation.

In order to cause a distraction, Finnemore first started 2 fires in the bin areas outside flats while the residents were asleep. Residents had to be rescued by emergency services after smoke from the fires stopped them from escaping, with many requiring medical assistance. It took the fire brigade almost 6 hours to tackle the fires and extensive damage was caused to the flats.

After lighting those fires, Finnemore visited the property of those he considered responsible for the investigation against him and posted a burning magazine through their letterbox. The flames went out before anything inside the flat caught fire, and Finnemore was arrested later that morning.

Finnemore was originally sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment at Leicester Crown Court in June 2019. Following the Solicitor General's referral, this has been increased to 10 years' imprisonment.

Commenting on the increase, Solicitor General Michael Ellis QC MP said:

"Finnemore put the lives of many of his neighbours at significant risk. It is extremely fortunate that more people weren't seriously harmed, and this is now reflected in the length of his sentence."

Cleveland Bridge wins contract in Sri Lanka with UKEF support



About the transaction: Cleveland Bridge

Sector	Infrastructure: rural transport
Project location	Sri Lanka
UKEF support	Buyer credit

Cleveland Bridge has designed and built a number of iconic landmarks including the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tyne Bridge. The company designs its modular bridges in the UK and they are easily assembled to meet the specific needs of each project.

This project has been designed to accelerate Sri Lanka's development through improvements in its rural transport infrastructure. Families and businesses will benefit directly; the bridges will reduce the distance people need to travel to reach essential services such as healthcare and education, and bring rural communities closer together by cutting transport costs.

Don Underwood, Commercial Consultant, Cleveland Bridge said:

We are delighted UKEF has chosen to support this project, and Cleveland Bridge's continued growth. UKEF's flexible support is hugely important for our international success, helping us build confidence with our overseas customers and access financing to deliver dynamic projects.

We work with banks to provide flexible, innovative, and competitive financing solutions. We support UK exporters, international project sponsors and buyers of UK goods and services.

[Tell us about the project](#)

Published 3 September 2019

Seaweed from the Scottish seas to global markets

Seaweed sourced from the pristine waters of the Scottish Outer Hebrides will now be distributed throughout Europe by Univar Solutions – a leading global ingredients distributor.

Univar Solutions was selected by Seaweed & Co. to distribute its PureSea® range of natural seaweed ingredients to the food and beverage markets in countries including Denmark, France and Germany. PureSea® ingredients are easy and convenient to use in almost any food, beverage and nutrition product, and are a natural source of iodine.

Established in 2015, Seaweed & Co. is a leading supplier of seaweed sustainably sourced in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. Its products are processed in a factory on the Isle of Lewis which employs 15 people and is expanding to accommodate increased demand for seaweed production.

The new distributor agreement with Univar Solutions will see Seaweed & Co.'s PureSea® ingredients shipped to food and nutrition manufacturers and brands across Europe, providing consumers with the many health and nutritional benefits of seaweed.

HM Trade Commissioner for Europe, Andrew Mitchell CMG, said:

I am delighted to see businesses like Seaweed & Co. expand their reach throughout Europe by tapping into the growing demand for high quality UK produce.

There are numerous opportunities for UK companies overseas, which is why the Department for International Trade is committed to boosting UK trade and prosperity across the continent of Europe and not just the European Union – whether that's by providing advice on market opportunities, connections to buyers or overcoming market access barriers.

Seaweed & Co. has supplied seaweed for 'Off the Eaten Path' – a range of vegetable snacks made by PepsiCo, the second largest food and beverage business in the world. Its ingredients have also been used in the M&S Smoked Hebridean Seaweed Mayonnaise.

The company also sells directly to customers through its Weed & Wonderful range which helps individuals easily incorporate seaweed into their everyday life and reap its health benefits. Co-founded by Kaiser Chiefs lead singer Ricky Wilson, the Weed & Wonderful range includes seaweed infused oils and seaweed capsules – all of which are available in health food stores across the UK including Holland and Barrett and Whole Foods Market.

Seaweed & Co. currently exports to countries including Israel, South Korea, Australia, Canada and the US, but will now expand further into Europe with support from Univar Solutions and cater to emerging consumer interest in plant-based diets. The business also plans to expand into Asia where food products from Scotland are recognised and valued for their premium quality.

The global commercial seaweed market is set to reach £17.5 billion by 2024 thanks to increased demand for organic, natural and sustainably sourced products. Seaweed not only supports thyroid health, metabolism and cognitive function, but also adds flavour to food and is often used as a replacement for salt.

Dr Craig Rose, Co-founder and Managing Director of Seaweed & Co., said:

Seaweed is undoubtedly the future. It ticks so many boxes for food, health and nutrition, and is absolutely on-trend. We have spent the past 4 years developing a supply chain and PureSea® range of ingredients that can meet the rapidly rising demand on a large and global scale.

Working with Univar Solutions is opening up a vast opportunity and network for my company, into Europe and beyond. As a partner they bring a huge amount of expertise, credibility and knowledge, which we are all extremely excited about.

[Extra motorway lanes saving drivers 40 minutes each week](#)

Highways England completed the biggest ever upgrade of the M6 in Cheshire earlier this year, and figures from the first few months of operation show that peak-time drivers are now travelling up to 15 miles per hour faster than before work started.

Drivers travelling towards Crewe after 9am and leaving the office after 6pm are seeing the biggest improvement to their journeys – saving more than eight minutes along the 19-mile route every day.

Commuters working a nine-to-five shift near Manchester are also spending over 30 minutes less time on the road each week. They are now able to travel at an average speed of 66 miles per hour on their way home from work – 15 miles per hour faster than before work started on the upgrade.

And businesses are benefitting from faster and more reliable journeys

throughout the day, with drivers travelling southbound previously facing average speeds of 50 miles per hour between midday and 1pm. They are now able to travel 14 miles per hour faster, saving almost six minutes along the route and cutting journey times by over a quarter.

Haulage firm Arclid Transport is based close to junction 17 of the M6 near Sandbach and delivers raw materials for a wide range of industries across the UK and Europe, including pharmaceutical, food manufacturing and detergent.

Managing director Andy Brookes said:

The upgrade of the M6 has made a significant improvement to journey times for our fleet at Arclid Transport. We carry out more than 300 movements a week and a large percentage of these originate from Sandbach, which is at the heart of the improved stretch.

The most noticeable factor is the reliability of the flow of traffic, meaning we are now more certain of estimated arrival times for our customers because there are far fewer delays.

Initial statistics from the first three months following the M6 smart motorway's completion also show that the number of collisions along the route has fallen by around 30%. There were 97 incidents reported from April to June 2015 compared to 68 incidents during the same three months this year – an average of 10 fewer collisions every month.

Overall, safety has improved by over 25% on England's 'all-lane running' sections of motorway where electronic signs display red Xs and variable speed limits to close lanes and control the flow of traffic, and emergency areas provide a safer place to stop.

Mike Bull, Highways England's smart motorways senior manager in the north-west, said:

Tens of thousands of drivers use the M6 every day to travel to and from work and this latest research shows that the extra lanes and new technology we've introduced are making a massive difference to people's journeys.

The motorway upgrade means businesses are also benefiting from quicker and more reliable journeys through Cheshire – supporting the regional and national economy.

We'll be starting work on several similar major motorway upgrades over the next few years and hope drivers will bear with us in anticipation of the long-term benefits these projects will bring.

Highways England completed the £255 million project to upgrade the M6 between Crewe and Knutsford in March 2019 – the most significant change since the M6

first opened in the county in 1963.

A fourth lane has been introduced in each direction and a total of 258 electronic signs, 104 traffic sensors and 70 CCTV cameras are helping to tackle congestion and improve journey times for around 120,000 drivers every day.

Construction work is currently taking place on a similar upgrade of the M62 near Warrington, and preliminary work is also due to start later this year on the stretch of the M62 over the Pennines which links the North West to Yorkshire.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Safety on smart motorways

Highways England has released the following statement to the media in relation to recent commentary about the safety performance of smart motorways:

Chief Highway Engineer Mike Wilson said:

Motorways in this country are among the very safest roads in the world. Highways England would never carry out a major improvement scheme without being confident that we would maintain or enhance this position.

Evidence indicates that smart motorways are helping to improve safety. The first nine of the latest generation of smart motorways have reduced casualty rates by more than 25 per cent.

Smart motorways are good for drivers, adding vital extra lanes to some of our busiest motorways and making journeys safer and more reliable. As with other roads, we monitor the safety performance of smart motorways and are rolling out enhancements to improve the road user experience.

Background

Driving on a smart motorway is simple and intuitive, and are no different from other roads. The main things to remember are:

- keep left unless overtaking
- do not drive under a Red X
- stick within the speed limit
- know what to do if you break down.

There is more information available on safe motorway driving on [our website](#).

We are also working closely with recovery operators to operate safely on smart motorways; [view our advice](#).

Smart motorways are designed with safety in mind, to be at least as safe as the conventional motorways they replace. Our evidence shows that they are reducing casualty rates:

- a risk assessment of the design for the latest generation of smart motorways estimated an overall 18 per cent reduction in risk compared to a conventional motorway
- the evidence indicates that, since opening, across nine 'all lane running' schemes the casualty rate has reduced by 28 per cent.
- this figure is based on three years' data from two smart motorway schemes on the M25 and one year of data from seven other schemes across the country.

The hard shoulder is not a safe place – more than a hundred people are killed or injured on the hard shoulder every year, and people stopping on them unnecessarily is an issue. Smart motorways effectively eliminate this risk.

Smart motorways have emergency areas a maximum of 1.5 miles apart – around 75 seconds of driving. They have emergency telephones and are wider than hard shoulders to enable drivers to get further away from traffic.

Feedback from road users show a clear majority feel confident driving on a smart motorway, and that they are safer and improve journey times. The watchdog, Transport Focus, recently published the Strategic Roads User Survey for 2018/19 and reported that 94% of people feel safe on motorways.

There has been comment in some media outlets about smart motorways increasing risk by 216%. This is incorrect – smart motorways were predicted to reduce safety risk compared to conventional motorways and evidence has demonstrated this prediction to be correct:

- the figure is an estimate made before the schemes were built and relates to one specific hazard relating to the risk associated with stopping in a live lane when there is little traffic.
- this is one of over 140 hazards that exist on a motorway when driving. Other includes, driving too fast, driver fatigue and the risks associated with hard shoulders.
- many of these hazards are reduced by the introduction of smart

motorways, but as we have always said the risk around stopping in a live lane increases, but this represents less than 5% of the overall risk of driving on a smart motorway.

- this same analysis showed that overall there would be around an 18% reduction in risk – this has been shown in practice with a reduced casualty rate with completed schemes of 28%

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.