

Interim chair of The Pensions Ombudsman announced

Caroline was Chief Executive of the [Money Advice Service](#) until 2017, overseeing a period of organisational transformation. Prior to that she was Director of Private Pensions at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). She is also an experienced pension trustee and from 2015 to 2019 was a non-executive trustee for the [NEST Corporation](#).

Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, Guy Opperman, said:

I am pleased to welcome Caroline Rookes into this important role.

She brings with her formidable expertise and I am very much looking forward to working together to champion pension members rights.

[TPO](#) has expanded considerably over the last 4 years, from what was a small organisation of approximately 40 staff, to a service that now includes an early resolution function and has grown to a headcount of 111.

As Director of Private Pensions, Caroline had regular dealings with TP0 and is also familiar with the other pensions arms length bodies with which TP0 has regular dealings.

As interim chair, Caroline will help the board strengthen its governance to better reflect the organisation's transformation, both in terms of size and the complexity of its work, as recommended by the [tailored review](#).

Caroline Rookes said:

I am delighted to have been appointed as interim chair of The Pensions Ombudsman. I look forward to working with Anthony and his team to improve still further this important service for pension customers.

Pensions Ombudsman Anthony Arter added:

I am delighted to welcome Caroline Rookes to The Pensions Ombudsman as interim chair. TP0 has undergone an extensive transformation over the last few years and Caroline's breadth of experience will help us to take it to the next level, ensuring we can continue to improve dispute resolution for our customers and the pensions industry.

Following recommendations made in the TPO tailored review, DWP is working with the Ombudsman to set up a board structure which will support organisational growth. Following public appointment rules, DWP has appointed an interim chair to support the recruitment for this board structure.

Caroline Rookes became a trustee of NEST Corporation on 27 February 2015.

She was the Chief Executive Officer of the Money Advice Service from 2013 to 2017. Formerly a senior civil servant, her career spanned several top management roles. She has extensive experience of and expertise in shaping and delivering major policy programs across government.

Between 2005 to 2013, Caroline was the director of Private Pensions at DWP where she led a landmark and successful reform of the UK's private pension regime introducing auto enrolment.

As Director of Private Pensions she had regular dealings with TPO and so is very familiar with the organisation and with the other pensions arms length bodies that TPO has regular dealings with. She has an in-depth knowledge of private pensions and is well known and respected in the sector.

From 2002 to 2005, Caroline was the director of savings pensions and share schemes at HM Revenue and Customs, where she was responsible for a fundamental reform of the tax regime on pensions.

Caroline was asked by The Pensions Regulator to lead an independent review of communications and support provided to British Steel Pension Scheme members during the 2017 to 2018 pension restructuring exercise. This was published in January 2019 and was well received by the regulator and the industry.

Caroline has been a trustee of the Civil Service Sports Council Superannuation scheme since 2015.

In 2010, Caroline was awarded the CBE and, in 2014, she was awarded an Alumni Award by Lancaster University for outstanding achievement.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5115

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Solicitor General's speech at Cambridge Symposium on Economic Crime 2019

The Solicitor General discusses some of the UK's key successes in tackling economic crime and the UK government's ambitious Economic Crime Plan.

Solicitor General's speech at Cambridge Symposium on Economic Crime 2019

Introduction

Good morning everyone. It is a pleasure to be here this morning, speaking to you at what is remarkably the 37th Cambridge International Symposium on Economic Crime.

I would like to begin by thanking the organisers and sponsors for their efforts in preparing such an impressive programme for the week ahead.

In particular, I would like to give special thanks to Professor Rider. Alongside his distinguished academic and legal career, Professor Rider has been the driving force behind this event throughout its almost 40 year history and this is an astonishing achievement.

While this is my first Cambridge Symposium since my appointment as Solicitor General in July 2019, I can see that the Symposium is an extraordinary event.

With over 2000 delegates from more than 100 countries, including experts from across government, civil society, business and academia, it provides a truly unique forum for considering the challenges we face from the ongoing and ever-evolving threat of economic crime.

Tackling this threat is a priority for the UK Government and the overarching theme of this year's Symposium – the shared responsibility for preventing, managing and combating economic crime – is very much at the heart of our response set out in our recently published Economic Crime Plan.

As the UK Government recognises, and as I am sure everybody in this room agrees, it is only through a joined-up, coordinated approach within and between the public and private sectors – as well as with our international partners – that we can effectively address the threat from Economic Crime.

As Law Officers for England and Wales, the Attorney General and I superintend the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Serious Fraud Office (SFO), both of which play an important role in tackling the Economic Crime threat.

With this in mind, I would like to take the opportunity today to highlight some of the significant progress we have made in tackling the threat here in the UK, and how the Economic Crime Plan seeks to embed and strengthen the reforms we have already delivered, as well as to significantly, strengthen coordination and cooperation within and between the public and private sectors.

Before I do that, I would like to start by describing the threat we face.

The threat of economic crime

As we all know, economic crime touches upon all aspects of society.

From low-level fraud through to the most sophisticated cyber-enabled market manipulation, it has a significant impact on our citizens, our institutions, our economies, our competitiveness and our reputations.

And the scale of the threat cannot be overstated.

For example, the number of fraud offences in England and Wales rose by 12% during 2018 alone, standing at 3.6 million – and they now account for almost one third of all crimes.

The social and economic cost of fraud to individuals is estimated to total £4.7bn billion per year, while the cost of organised fraud against business and the public sector is estimated to total £5.9 billion.

Furthermore, economic crime facilitates the serious and organised crime that causes so much harm to individuals and communities and is estimated to cost the UK £37 billion each year. Criminality flourishes when these criminals can launder the proceeds of their illicit activity.

The scale of money laundering impacting the UK annually is estimated to be in the tens of billions of pounds, and this abuse no doubt impacts on the UK's reputation as one of the world's leading financial centres.

Although the UK enjoys higher levels of integrity than many other countries, we are not immune from the effects of bribery and corruption. Corruption can increase the cost of doing business for individual companies by as much as 10%, distorting markets and deterring trade and investment.

The economic crime threat does not stand still. It is continuously growing and evolving, with criminal networks becoming increasingly resilient and adaptable, quickly exploiting advances in technologies, services, and products, such as crypto-assets.

This gives us a sense of what we are dealing with, however we recognise that more needs to be done to truly understand the scale of the threat and respond to it effectively – this requires a collaborative approach across the sectors, which is why we are committed to working with the private sector to better understand and map out the threat.

Recent successes

To tackle this threat, we have already made some serious inroads by introducing a number of world-leading reforms.

In October last year, we launched the National Economic Crime Centre – or NECC – to deliver a step-change in our approach to economic crime.

The NECC truly amplifies the notion of 'shared responsibility' – it is a collaborative, multi-agency centre, which brings together law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, government departments, regulatory bodies, and the private sector to deliver a shared objective of driving down serious and organised economic crime.

I will not say too much about the NECC, as you will have heard from the Director General, Graeme Biggar, earlier this morning. However, I am pleased to say that the SFO and CPS have played a key role in its formation, and are continuing to play a full and active role in its ongoing development and operations.

We have also seen the use of the new powers we legislated for in the Criminal Finances Act 2017 – with the first Unexplained Wealth Orders being issued by the courts, enabling agencies to freeze properties worth over £20 million.

Furthermore, the SFO has had an account freezing order granted and successfully secured the forfeiture of over £1.5 million in March this year. This is believed to be one of the largest seizures of its kind in the UK. The NECC will seek to maximise the use of these powers.

As well as providing law enforcement with such tools, the Criminal Finances Act also created new corporate offences of failure to prevent the facilitation of tax evasion. The new offences came into force on 30 September 2017, and build upon the Bribery Act 2010 – where we continue to see the teeth of the Bribery Act: last year the CPS secured its first section 7 'failure to prevent' bribery conviction.

Furthermore, the introduction of the Bribery Act's 'failure to prevent' offence has shown signs of prompting companies to review their compliance systems and cooperate even more with law enforcement.

We are not stopping there; the Government has completed its call for evidence on corporate criminal liability for wider economic crime, and is currently considering the response.

We have also continued to see the use of Deferred Prosecution Agreements (DPA), another significant tool in our armoury.

In July this year, the SFO secured its fifth DPA with Serco Geographic Ltd, which will result in payments of £19.2m and the SFO's costs.

This is the fifth DPA the SFO secured since their introduction in 2014 – three of which relate to offences under the Bribery Act.

DPAs are not only promoting good governance and compliance, but also encouraging the private sector to work more closely with criminal justice partners.

The SFO have also recently published guidance on corporate cooperation, which you will have heard more about from the Director, Lisa Osofsky, earlier this morning.

As you can see, through these reforms together with the wider suite of reforms we are delivering as part of our five-year Anti-Corruption Strategy, and our refreshed Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, we have made great strides in our fight against economic crime.

And these efforts are being recognised. For example, in December 2018, the Financial Action Taskforce concluded that UK has the strongest anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regime of the more than 60 countries assessed to date.

However, and as the Financial Action Taskforce also highlighted, we recognise more needs to be done: to embed our reforms and go further still; to prioritise more effectively; and critically, to further strengthen coordination and cooperation within and between the public and private sectors.

The future response – the Economic Crime Plan 2019-22

That is why we published our three year public-private [Economic Crime Plan](#) in July this year. This plan sets out an ambitious agenda to strengthen our whole-system response for tackling economic crime.

Premised on the notion that the ever-evolving and clandestine nature of economic crime means that it can only be combatted by harnessing the capabilities, resources, and experience of both the public and private sectors, the Plan sets out for the first time how both sectors will work together to tackle economic crime.

It builds on the success of existing public-private partnerships such the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce. This Taskforce, which has supported over 600 law enforcement investigations and directly contributed to over 150 arrests and the seizure or restraint of over £34 million since its creation in 2014, demonstrates just what a successful public-private partnership can achieve.

The Plan sets out seven priority areas, which reflect a collective assessment of the greatest barriers to combatting economic crime and where we see the greatest scope for collaborative work between the public and private sectors.

These seven priorities will be familiar to us all, and are reflected in this week's programme, focusing on how through whole-system cooperation and coordination we aim to:

- better understand the threat;
- better share information;
- strengthen our powers, tools, and procedures;
- enhance our collective capabilities;
- build resilience in our management of risk and supervisory regime;
- improve transparency of ownership; and
- deliver a truly international approach to our fight against economic

crime.

We will deploy the full force of both the public and private sectors to deliver on these priorities, by way of 52 concrete actions.

I would like to pick up on three important themes for me.

First, ensuring that we all work together to ensure we are responding to the threat with an effective criminal justice response.

The Economic Crime Plan sets out a number of commitments which will place us in a better position:

- We will continue to develop the National Economic Crime Centre as a genuine public-private hub for combatting serious and organised economic crime. And with the NECC at the forefront, we will undertake further work to understand and enhance our capabilities, as well as develop public-private action plans to combat the economic crime threat.
- It is clear that investigators and prosecutors are facing an unprecedented challenge in dealing with the ever-increasing amount of digital material presented to them. We will implement the recommendations coming out of the Attorney General's Disclosure Review and this includes working closely with the police, the CPS and SFO, as well as the tech industry, in order to explore further the possible technological solutions.
- To ensure we have the appropriate criminal justice response to economic crime, we will also launch a flagship economic crime court, and work is already underway to achieve this.
- We are also firmly committed to taking forward the Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) Transformation Programme. With the private sector, law enforcement, and the regulators, the Home Office is co-designing a new system which will be more efficient and effective, and which will benefit business and the public sector. This will help ensure we have the right information to combat economic crime.
- Information sharing is vital – and that is why we will continue to enhance the Joint Money Laundering and Intelligence Taskforce, as well as remove barriers to information sharing which may exist to ensure that the right organisations have access to the right information at the right time, with the appropriate structures, controls and culture in place to facilitate this.

Secondly, linked to the first, we need to ensure we are doing everything we can to ensure that crime does not pay.

Money is the common thread that runs through almost all offending, as criminals use the proceeds of their crime to fund their lifestyle and conduct further crime.

This is why we have also published our Asset Recovery Action Plan alongside the Economic Crime Plan, which sets out an ambitious, collaborative approach for improving our response to recovering criminal finances. One of the key pillars of this Plan is about ensuring that the legal framework supports effective confiscation and denial of criminal assets. This will require co-ordinated action to be taken by a number of partners, across a range of sectors.

We recognise that, in an increasingly competitive world, our longer term economic prosperity needs to be based on trust.

We know that companies across the world can be abused to facilitate corruption, serious and organised economic crime, and tax evasion. This is why the UK is spear heading an international campaign to make public registers of beneficial ownership information the global norm by 2023.

But we are not stopping there...

- We have also launched plans for reforming our UK company register and we plan to legislate to increase the accuracy and usefulness of the information available.
- And by 2021, we will roll-out a public beneficial ownership register of foreign companies that own or wish to buy property in the UK. This will be the first of its kind in the world and will allow us to know who exactly owns high end property in our country. No longer can wealthy foreign investors sit behind opaque companies.

As we have seen with our own Public Register – the register of Persons with Significant Control – launched in 2016, this, together with the arrangements for timely and unrestricted access to beneficial ownership information in our Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, has benefitted UK law enforcement, including the SFO.

Conclusion

So, as you can see, there is much work underway.

And I am confident that through our whole-system approach, we can deliver on the Economic Crime Plan's vision of defending the UK against economic crime, preventing harm to society and individuals, protecting the integrity of the UK economy, and supporting legitimate growth and prosperity.

However, we cannot be complacent. The threat is ongoing and evolving, and it is incumbent on us all to keep pace and respond accordingly.

The week ahead provides an excellent opportunity to consider the new challenges we are facing, and how we can better work together to address the threat.

I hope you will all grasp these opportunities with both hands.

[Guidance: Rural Payments: registering and updating your details](#)

How to register and update your personal, business and land details on the Rural Payments service (including RLE1 guidance).

[British Embassy Madrid on social media](#)

As social media continues to evolve into one of the most important ways to communicate online, we are developing a strong presence across a range of channels, making us more accessible, more open and more transparent in the way we communicate.

You can follow us on:

Facebook

[Uk in Spain](#) – follow our events, news and activities from the FCO and our partners (in Spanish and in English).

[Brits in Spain](#) – up to date advice and information from British Embassy in Madrid which is important for British residents living some or all the year in Spain.

[Brits visiting Spain](#) – planning a visit to Spain? We share with you information to help you have a great holiday without any of the hassle.

Ukinspain: twitter.com/ukinspain – information for British nationals in Spain, news and activities from the FCO and British Embassy in Madrid and British consulates around Spain (in Spanish and in English).

Our Ambassador's Twitter account [@HughElliottUK](https://twitter.com/HughElliottUK)

Our DHM's Twitter account [@TimHemmingsFCO](https://twitter.com/TimHemmingsFCO)

BritsvisitSpain: twitter.com/BritsvisitSpain – official Embassy channel aimed at reducing the proportion of Brits who encounter serious problems in Spain.

tradegovESP: twitter.com/UKTISpain – Information for British companies exporting to Spain and Spanish companies investing in the UK.

SIN_Spain: twitter.com/Sin_Spain – UK Science and Innovation Network (SIN) in Spain. Promoting UK Spain science collaborations.

Flickr

www.flickr.com/photos/ukinspain – our events, our Ambassador's visits in pictures, Ministerial visits.

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www.youtube.com/user/ukinspain – watch our videos with UK Ministers, policy experts, case studies, and much more.

LinkedIn

[DIT Spain group](#) – this DIT LinkedIn group brings together trade and investment experts and businesses. It offers knowledge, insight and support, facilitating connections to help businesses achieve international success.

[British Scientist in Spain](#): network to promote communication within the community of British scientists working in Spain and foster scientific collaboration between the UK and Spain, triggering partnerships between this community and public/private institutions linked to research.

Instagram

[HughElliottUK](#) – our Instagram account offers photos and short videos of Ambassador's diplomatic activity.

[UK in Spain](#) – our official Instagram account following the activities of the British Embassy.