

Press release: Three motor racing friends jailed for diverting millions to fund opulent lifestyle

At Leeds Crown Court [Tuesday 31 July] former company director Jonathan France was sentenced to 10 years, as well as being disqualified as a company director for 12 years.

Also at court were his accomplices Jody Firth and Graham Myles Schofield having assisted Jonathan France carry out his dishonest activities.

Jody Firth was sentenced for 5 years and 4 months, while Graham Myles Schofield received a sentence of 2 years and 6 months. Jody Firth was also disqualified as a company director for 5 years and Graham Schofield was banned from running companies for 3 years.

Jonathan France was first disqualified from being a director of limited companies for 14 years in 2004 for his role in the mismanagement of Eric France and Son (Metals) Limited which went into insolvency. He was then declared bankrupt in November 2008 as he was unable to pay more than £7million owed after the collapse of his sole-trader businesses Embassy Racing and EFS Group.

Being bankrupt and disqualified should have limited his ability to directly or indirectly run a company but Jonathan France ignored these restrictions and continued to run companies. He also diverted millions of pounds from the company accounts to a combination of other business and personal accounts so that he could buy a house, luxury items and a fleet of cars.

And with the help of Graham Myles Schofield, he misled the Trustees managing his affairs that he had no assets to pay back his debts. Just under £7 million has since been recovered by the Trustee in bankruptcy.

Deputy Chief Investigation Officer, John Fitzsimmons, of the Insolvency Service, said:

Jonathan France is a fraudster and lied in order to cover up his true activities and fund his opulent lifestyle. But it wasn't just him who carried out the deception as he was supported along the way by Schofield and Firth, two racing colleagues who were well aware of France's bankruptcy.

We will always seek to tackle those who flagrantly disregard and cynically abuse the insolvency regime, which is there to protect creditors. After a substantial investigation we are pleased to see that France, Schofield and Firth have received significant prison

terms.

Only months before he was made bankrupt in 2008 on the grounds that he had no money to pay his debts, Jonathan France deliberately transferred close to £180,000 worth of money and assets out of his personal estate to avoid paying his creditors.

France's money and assets went to Graham Myles Schofield and Jody Firth, friends he had made through motor-racing. Assets moved by France included two classic cars worth £27,000 to Graham Myles Schofield and Jody Firth, as well as a further £152,607 was transferred to bank accounts controlled by Graham Myles Schofield.

Jonathan France then began a sustained campaign to continue running companies despite having restrictions placed on him. With Schofield, he also engineered false and misleading explanations to the Trustees and the Official Receiver about a substantial amount of possessions.

Between 2008 and 2013, Jonathan France managed and controlled JKL (Wakefield) Ltd before the company went into insolvent liquidation. The company bought and sold metals and listed Jody Firth as the company director but not Jonathan France.

And Jonathan France repeated the same tactic when Graham Myles Schofield had his name down as the official director for two racing companies effectively controlled by Jonathan France. WFR Ltd and WFR Holdings Ltd ran between 2011 and 2014 before also going into liquidation.

While managing JKL (Wakefield), Jonathan France diverted more than £6 million from the company accounts to a combination of other business and personal accounts.

Items bought from the £6 million included a 5-bedroom house in Huddersfield through a Discretionary Settlement Trust, while just under £200,000 was spent on furniture and £70,000 was used to buy fine wines.

And around £1.8 million was also used to purchase a fleet of high-end vehicles and personalised number plates, including three Aston Martins, two Ferraris, as well as a Rolls Royce and McLaren.

Jonathan France achieved the deception by falsifying company cheques, invoices and other paperwork to make it appear as if payments had been to bona fides creditors of the company when in fact they were made to purchase the cars and luxury goods.

After Jonathan France repeatedly failed to properly disclose his property to the Trustees, he was twice privately examined at Huddersfield County Court in 2012. At court, Jonathan France repeatedly and falsely argued that he had sold various items of jewellery, including two Rolexes and a platinum ring, as well as a number of paintings to a colleague for £250,000.

Jonathan France pleaded guilty to four counts of fraudulently transferring

property, three counts of acting as a director while bankrupt, as well as one count each for failing to disclose property to the Official Receiver or Trustee, perjury, fraudulent trading, false accounting and money laundering.

Jody Firth pleaded guilty to helping Jonathan France run a company despite being a bankrupt, while both Jody Firth and Graham Schofield pleaded guilty to money laundering.

The defendants

Jonathan Dean France aged 46 of Wakefield

Graham Myles Schofield aged 53 of Mirfield, West Yorkshire

Jody Dean Firth aged 36 of Wakefield

The Insolvency Service (England and Wales)

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.

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 Enforcement teams contribute 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.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Action to address recent fire door issues](#)

Fire doors from five suppliers have now been identified as failing to meet requisite fire performance standard following an on-going investigation by

the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

This highlights broader potential failings within the industry and the Government is taking immediate action to address this.

MHCLG began investigating the fire door industry after it was found that a glazed, composite fire door from Grenfell Tower manufactured by Manse Masterdor failed a 30 minute fire resistance test after approximately 15 minutes. Issues were subsequently identified with doors produced by Masterdor Limited (the successor business to Manse Masterdor). Investigations have continued and in the last few days doors from 3 additional manufacturers have failed fire resistance testing when tested on both sides.

MHCLG is writing to all building control bodies highlighting the need to check that existing building regulations guidance on new fire door installations is followed. The guidance sets out the tests which should be performed – including testing doors on both sides – in order to meet building regulations requirements.

The Secretary of State for Communities has instructed major fire door suppliers to meet this week and agree a clear plan of action to tackle the failings which have been identified, with weekly reports on progress.

The government's Independent Expert Panel and the National Fire Chiefs Council have advised that the additional risk to public safety is low, as even when not meeting full resistance standards fire doors will provide some protection from the spread of fire and are part of layered fire protection systems within buildings.

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

While the department's investigations are on-going, I now have enough evidence to suggest that there is a broader issue across the fire door market. That is why I am calling on suppliers to meet this week and provide reassurance that they are gripping this issue properly.

I want to see a clear plan of action to rectify existing problems and ensure such failures are not repeated in the future. Whilst our Expert Panel assures me the risk remains low I want to assure the public that the government is doing everything it can to ensure construction products are of the highest safety standards and accurately tested and marketed.

The Secretary of State has also asked National Trading Standards to oversee local investigations which are taking place. MHCLG will also work with third party certification bodies to develop minimum standards of assurance to provide building owners with greater confidence in the fire doors they purchase.

The products which have failed government tests to date were glazed and

unglazed doors supplied by Manse Masterdor and Masterdor Limited and glazed composite doors supplied by Specialist Building Products Limited, trading as Permadoor; Solar Windows Limited; and Birtley Group Limited, trading as Bowater by Birtley. All doors that are known to have failed to meet the necessary standards have been withdrawn from the market and the department has informed local trading standards of its findings. Each manufacturer has co-operated fully with the government's investigations, which are continuing.

What is the safety advice for residents?

- The National Fire Chiefs Council has advised that the additional risk to public safety is low.
- In the event of a fire people should follow existing fire procedures for the building.
- Residents should also test their smoke alarms regularly to ensure they work and ensure that their flat front door is fitted with a working self-closing device.
- All doors provide essential protection in a fire if they are properly closed.
- Fire safety advice for residents is available at:
www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/High-Rise-Safety-for-Residents

[News story: Safeguard agreement for vulnerable adults in custody published](#)

The Home Office has today published a [voluntary framework](#) to ensure that vulnerable adults suspected of an offence have access to justice and that their welfare is safeguarded.

The partnership agreement sets out how Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and local authorities can work together to commission and provide appropriate adults for vulnerable adults. This will help ensure that vulnerable people get the support they need when detained in police custody or questioned voluntarily elsewhere.

Appropriate adults are required to be present to help ensure suspects understand their rights and entitlements and that evidence isn't obtained in ways which, by virtue of someone's vulnerability, might lead to unsafe convictions. Commissioning appropriate adult services in England is led principally by local authorities, but it isn't always straightforward and differs across the country. This voluntary agreement sets out a collaborative approach to commissioning services in forces in England going forward.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Nick Hurd, said:

When a vulnerable adult is suspected of an offence it's vital an independent person is there to ensure they are treated fairly and their needs are taken into account.

The document we've published today provides a framework for police and local councils to work together to make sure the right people are in the room when evidence is obtained to reduce the risk of miscarriages of justice.

The agreement has been developed in partnership with the National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). Through bringing all the relevant agencies together we make sure everyone is signed up to the same way of working.

The role of an appropriate adult is set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and its codes of practice which outlines the rules and safeguards for policing in England and Wales.

Press release: UK exports to non EU countries continue to outstrip EU

In figures released in the second calendar year after the EU referendum, exports to non-EU countries amounted to around £342 billion in 2017, showing the worldwide demand for British goods and services remains. Exports to EU countries were around £274 billion in 2017.

The fastest growing export market for the UK since 2010 was Oman, with exports increasing by 354% to £3 billion. This was followed by Macedonia (FYROM) with UK trade growing by 318% to £1 billion and then Kazakhstan which was up by 210% to £2 billion.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP said:

British goods remain in global demand as exports to non-EU countries continue to grow in markets such as Oman. It shows the confidence the world has in our goods and is important as 90% of global trade will come from outside EU.

As an international economic department, we have a dynamic and experienced team who will negotiate free trade deals and make a success of Brexit. We're also supporting UK businesses in exporting more and talking to international businesses on why we should be

the top destination for investment through our GREAT campaign.

Today's figures also reveal in 2017:

- overall exports of goods rose by 13% to £339 billion
- overall exports of services rose by 7% to £277 billion
- the USA remains the UK's top export market, buying over £112 billion worth of goods and services in 2017, an increase of 8% since 2016

The news is promising as separate ONS figures show that UK exports overall rose by 5% in the year to end May 2018. Our world-leading services sector recorded a trade surplus of £111 billion in the same period, with services exports totalling £279 billion in the year to May 2018.

The UK also attracted more than 2,000 foreign direct investment projects in financial year 2017 to 2018.

- [ONS Pink Book](#)
- fastest growing markets only include countries with more than £1 billion in value in 2017 and excludes Crown Dependencies and Gibraltar

[Press release: Japan will “spare no effort to support the UK” in joining the CPTPP](#)

Japanese Cabinet Minister Toshimitsu Motegi has welcomed the UK's recent announcement that it is looking to seek potential accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), saying Japan would “spare no efforts to support the UK” in a meeting with Dr Liam Fox, international trade secretary, this morning.

Dr Liam Fox met Motegi, who is responsible for CPTPP, as part of a visit to Japan, the UK's closest partner in Asia.

The UK and Japan are like-minded advocates for global free trade, and building on our existing relationship with Japan is a key element of delivering the UK's first independent trade policy for over 40 years as we leave the European Union.

This is Dr Fox's first visit to Asia following his launch of a [consultation on potentially joining CPTPP](#), and his welcoming this month's signature of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Japan accounts for nearly half of the CPTPP's GDP, and is the UK's fifth largest trading partner with total trade worth £28 billion, up by nearly 15% in 2017.

Dr Fox is also beating the drum for British businesses based in Japan, meeting a range of business leaders and the British Chambers of Commerce Japan. Further, he is highlighting the value of Japanese investment in the UK, in light of the huge and job-creating investments made in the last year by the likes of Hitachi, Toyota and Mitsubishi Corp.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

As we set our own trade policy for the first time in over 40 years, the government is determined to break new ground by putting the UK at the heart of the world's fastest growing regions, like Asia.

That's why I'm visiting Japan, our fifth largest trading partner, and meeting Prime Minister Abe and colleagues, British businesses and Japanese investors to take our trading relationship to the next level and deliver a new framework for free and open UK-Japan trade. These talks are vital in putting the country at the heart of the Asia-Pacific, a region that will be the engine of global growth in the twenty-first century.

Dr Fox welcomed the recent EU-Japan EPA with Theresa May and Prime Minister Abe agreeing to work quickly to establish a new partnership between Japan and the UK based on the final terms of the agreement. Ensuring certainty to businesses in both countries is something they have made clear is a top priority.

The 11 members of CPTPP accounted for £82 billion of UK trade in 2016, more than the Netherlands, France or China. The economies of existing members are diverse, spanning a region which is a driving force of global economic growth.