

Press release: False rape accuser jailed after Solicitor General's referral

A woman who falsely accused 4 men of sexual or violent offences has been sent to prison after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred her sentence for being too low.

Anna Judith Costin, 30, accused her victims of rape, sexual assault, or assault during early 2016. None of the men were charged, but as a result of the false reports some spent time in custody, were harassed by members of the public, or suffered psychologically.

Costin was originally sentenced at Shrewsbury Crown Court in March, where she was given a sentence of a 3 year community order and 60 day rehabilitation activity requirement. Today, after the Solicitor General's reference, the Court of Appeal increased her sentence to 4 years immediate custody.

Commenting on the sentence increase, the Solicitor General said:

"False rape allegations have a serious impact not only on the lives of the accused, but can also have an indirect but profoundly damaging effect on genuine victims of rape. It is important that Costin's sentence reflects the gravity of her crimes."

Press release: UK Hydrographic Office appoints Chief Technology Officer

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has announced the appointment of Terry Makewell to the position of Chief Technology Officer.

Terry has over 20 years' experience in leadership positions in government, academia and the creative industries, and will be instrumental in further developing the UKHO as a world leading centre in the marine domain. This will support the UKHO in delivering its vision of becoming the world-leading marine geospatial information agency and hydrographic office by 2020.

Terry joins the UKHO from the Office for National Statistics, where he held the role of Chief Digital Officer. His previous government experience includes the role of Head of Digital & Global Media at the Met Office. Terry is also a member of the British Council Digital Advisory Group.

In the private sector, Terry has held roles in the publishing, academic and cultural sectors. He has a degree in Computer Science from Southampton University and gained an MBA (Entrepreneurship) in 2006.

Commenting on his appointment, Terry Makewell said: "I'm thrilled to join such a forward-thinking organisation and to be leading the incredible teams working at the centre of the marine geospatial revolution. It has been great to see how agile delivery methods are central to us delivering value early and often."

One of Terry's first engagements at the UKHO was to support its data science experts who presented at the Government Digital Service's 'Sprint 18' conference on 10 May. Here, they demonstrated how the UKHO is using machine learning to exploit satellite imagery in order to help protect the marine environment and promote global maritime trade.

News story: Julie Lennard appointed Chief Executive of DVLA

Julie Lennard has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

Ms Lennard will take up the post shortly and has been DVLA's interim Chief Executive since March. Prior to this she was DVLA's Director of Strategy, Policy and Communications, held since August 2014.

Department for Transport Permanent Secretary Bernadette Kelly said:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Julie Lennard to the role, leading DVLA at such an important time as it develops into a digital hub for motorists. Julie is an experienced and talented leader and brings a wealth of experience to this crucial role.

Ms Lennard is the first woman to be appointed as DVLA's Chief Executive. In her previous role as Director of Strategy, Policy and Communications, Julie was responsible for delivering the organisation's business strategy and policy development, overseeing a directorate that also includes data protection, Parliamentary liaison and communications.

Prior to this, Julie worked at The National Archives where her responsibilities included developing strategic policy relationships with senior stakeholders and overseeing Parliamentary and legislative issues.

Julie has also worked for Which? one of the largest independent consumer organisations in Europe, in a range of roles including as a journalist and

representing the campaigning organisation to government departments, agencies and other stakeholders at a national and international level.

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Press release: Plant nurseries will remain exempt from business rates

Owners of plant nurseries will continue to benefit from a business rates exemption thanks to government legislation introduced today (Wednesday 23 May) by Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP.

For nearly a century, land and buildings at plant nursery grounds enjoyed an agricultural exemption from business rates to support the rural economy.

However, following a recent Court of Appeal decision, the Valuation Office Agency has begun to assess buildings at plant nurseries, including structures such as poly-tunnels.

Local Government Minister, Rishi Sunak MP, said:

Plant nurseries are an essential part of the rural economy and it is vital they are protected.

This legislation will put a stop to this unreasonable burden on businesses and will help maintain a productive, competitive and sustainable agricultural sector.

Under the legislation, plant nursery owners who have been paying rates since the Court of Appeal decision will be able to apply for a backdated refund.

Further information

Read the [Non Domestic Rates \(Nursery Grounds\) Bill](#) introduced today.

Plant nurseries are establishments where plants or trees are grown in the initial stages of their lives. The bill does not extend to garden centres where plants are displayed and sold to the public (including garden centres sometimes called “nurseries”). Garden centres are rateable and will continue to pay rates after the Bill.

The Bill will amend the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to ensure both agricultural land and buildings at plant nursery grounds are exempt from business rates.

The legislation will be amended retrospectively, with effect from 1 April 2015. Any plant nurseries charged business rates from this date will be eligible to apply for a refund.

We have also published a [factsheet](#) on the Bill.

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[News story: New Chair of the Social Mobility Commission recommended](#)

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has today (23 May) recommended Dame Martina Milburn as the preferred candidate for the position of Chair of the Social Mobility Commission.

Dame Martina has been put forward as the preferred candidate after showing that she had the skills and experience to drive forward the work of improving equality of opportunities for disadvantaged young people. She has spent 14 years as Chief Executive of the Prince's Trust, supporting more than 450,000 disadvantaged young people across the country in that time, with three in four of these going on to work, education or training.

Since 2004 she has led work to remove the barriers too many young people still face, including more than 100,000 through 'Achieve' – an education programme that helps those at risk of exclusion from school – and projects that improve young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience. Dame Martina also oversaw the charity's expansion by integrating the Fairbridge personal development programme and Mosaic, a mentoring initiative, extending links with young people from deprived inner-city areas and those from Muslim communities.

She is also a non-executive director of the National Citizen Service and the Capital City College Group, and was previously Chief Executive of BBC Children in Need and of the Association of Spinal Injury Research, Rehabilitation and Reintegration.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Dame Martina has spent her career as a tireless champion for underprivileged children, young people and their families, providing better opportunities for them to fulfil their potential. Her leadership of the Prince's Trust has improved the education, skills and self-esteem of thousands of young people, and will be key in progressing our social mobility agenda.

I am grateful to her predecessor Alan Milburn, whose work as Chair of the Commission over five years shone a light on the injustices that still exist too frequently in this country. I look forward to working with Dame Martina as she works with us to eliminate them.

The recommendation comes as the Department for Education publishes its [response](#) to the Education Select Committee's report on the future of the Social Mobility Commission.

Dame Martina was chosen out of a competitive field of applicants, and demonstrated strong commitment to the values of the Commission during the

assessment process.

Dame Martina Milburn said:

It is a privilege to be put forward to Chair the Social Mobility Commission. I hope my experience of working closely with and listening to young people from different backgrounds will help make a difference.

The Chair of the Social Mobility Commission will hold the government and Ministers to account on its work to spread opportunity evenly across the country.

The Secretary of State for Education will now ask Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee, to arrange for the committee to meet Dame Martina. He will consider the committee's conclusions before deciding whether to proceed with the appointment.