

Press release: International effort to tackle misleading online reviews

Over the last year, consumer protection agencies around the globe have worked together to prevent false or misleading reviews and endorsements online, and promote new guidelines to help review sites, digital influencers, marketing professionals and other traders understand what they should do to operate fairly.

The CMA's 2015/16 Presidency of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN) focused on improving practices in this area, and since then a range of action has been taken worldwide.

This has seen at least 16 enforcement cases, including one preventing a US business using deceptive online reviews that had been posted by its own employees, and another obtaining commitments from 4 Norwegian online newspapers to ensure that marketing messages are clearly distinguishable from editorial content. Another case, currently before the Australian Federal Court, seeks to stop a property services company from trying to block guests it suspects would leave a negative review on TripAdvisor from receiving the email inviting their feedback.

In the UK, the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) recent cases include requiring a retailer to disclose unfavourable reviews so that customers have the complete picture, and ensuring that a marketing firm clearly identifies when reviews posted online by social media celebrities are advertising. It has also recently [secured improvements to Airbnb's review system](#) so that guests can more easily leave feedback where they have chosen to cut short their stay in a property.

International enforcement efforts have been supported by a global awareness-raising campaign to drive up standards, in the form of guidelines for businesses and digital influencers involved in arranging, managing or posting online reviews or endorsements. The launch of today's social media campaign continues ICPEN's commitment to increase compliance in this area.

Nisha Arora, CMA Senior Director and former ICPEN President, said:

Shoppers worldwide are increasingly relying on online reviews and endorsements before they make a decision to buy a product or service. People need to know they can trust the information they find online, and make informed choices as a result.

By working together with international consumer protection partners, whether in providing clearer guidelines or taking enforcement action against businesses that flout the law, we can achieve greater impact and better outcomes for consumers across the globe.

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For more information on the CMA see our [homepage](#) or follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Flickr](#).
2. ICPEN is an informal network of consumer protection law enforcement authorities representing over 60 global economies. It provides a forum where authorities can share information and work to combat consumer problems which arise with cross-border transactions in goods and services, such as e-commerce.
3. For more information visit www.icpen.org.
4. For ICPEN's guidelines and examples of members' activities on online reviews and endorsements, see <https://www.icpen.org/initiatives>.
5. For past CMA actions on online reviews and endorsements, see <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/online-reviews-and-endorsements>.
6. Enquiries should be directed to Beatrice Cole (beatrice.cole@cma.gsi.gov.uk, 020 3738 6472).

Speech: Speech by UK Ambassador to Somalia at Hargeisa Book Fair

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to be here at the Hargeisa International Book Fair on this, my first visit to Somaliland. It is a privilege to address this vibrant, outward-looking and thought-provoking gathering. I congratulate Dr Musse Jama and Ms Ayan Mahmoud on driving this festival from its inception nine years ago to the internationally celebrated fixture it is today and thank them for offering me this opportunity to reaffirm British support for the event.

As we meet at this festival of Somali poetry, influence and ideas, it is right to remember the severe and ongoing drought afflicting the people of Somaliland. To help those most affected, the UK has increased its emergency aid to over \$200m. This support has so far provided safe drinking water and food to some one million people and emergency healthcare to nearly half a million people, including tens of thousands of Somalilanders. I will shortly be seeing some of this work for myself.

Our purpose today is to appreciate the global impact of the Somali cultural heritage and, prompted by the theme of connectivity, I salute the longstanding diaspora and historic ties that bind Somaliland and the UK. The many Somalis in Britain with roots in Somaliland are making a huge contribution to security, democracy and prosperity here in Somaliland. They

are also supporting social integration and cohesion in the UK.

In turn, the UK commitment to you, the people of Somaliland, is steadfast. We are the largest international donor to Somaliland. Together with your government and in partnership with many of you, we are helping to improve healthcare, education and other essential services, as well as advocating the full participation of women in public life.

The great Hadraawi, who you will recall spent part of his life in London, observed 'How good it would be to reason clearly, to settle the world into peace, preserve it within its proper bounds'. Thanks to the institutions of democracy we are able to do just that. You have the opportunity this autumn to reinforce Somaliland's reputation as a beacon of democracy with a fourth presidential election.

The UK is pleased to support your independent electoral institution in its efforts to oversee a fair electoral contest. Besides contributing to the registration of voters, the UK is deploying a team of 60 independent election observers to give an impartial view of the election process. Some of them are already here.

But a functioning democratic system is about much more than casting ballots. It is underpinned by rights and institutions. Democracy depends on the media, academics and publishing houses sharing the information we need to develop and inform critical thinking. Our theme of connectivity reminds us that the internet is a rich seam of information. The November election offers you, the voter, the opportunity to speak your mind and influence decisions to shape your future and that of your children. Journalists have a critical role to play in enabling us to determine how to vote. That is why we support reporters, advocate effective media regulation and champion free speech.

Democracy depends also on the rule of law. In Britain, over 800 years ago, the Magna Carta established the principle that all subjects, including the king, were subject to the rule of law and had a right to a fair trial. That notion remains fundamental to democracies around the world and nurtures the equality we all cherish. In support of the rule of law, we are working with your judges to help ensure any disputes arising from the election are settled swiftly, fairly and in accordance with the law.

'If', as Aristotle said, 'Liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost'. To quote the motto of the first Hargeisa International Book Fair 'Freedom is not for free'. It is incumbent on us all to use opportunities such as this to debate the issues that matter to us, to seek and respect the views of others, and to vote. Democracy is not something that is done. It is something we do.

Your staging of a fair, transparent and timely election, your participation in it and your acceptance of the outcome will help sustain the stability of which you are rightly proud. Beyond the election, the UK looks forward to continuing to support you, the people of Somaliland, as you build on your achievements of recent decades so everyone here gets the education,

healthcare and opportunities they crave whatever their heritage, wherever they live. I am confident that, with the support of the diaspora and your many friends, you, the people of Somaliland can fulfil your tremendous potential to prosper in a way that benefits of every man, woman and child here.

Thank you

[Press release: Car dealer disqualified from acting as a director for 10 years](#)

On 9 June 2017 at the County Court at Coventry Judge Jones at the made a disqualification order against Mr Warland that he could not act as a director for ten years from 30 June 2017.

An Insolvency Service investigation found that the company sold five motor vehicles belonging to customers under sale or return agreements and failed to pass on the money from the sales – totaling at least £174,450 – to the customers.

The company went into liquidation on 24 October 2014, owing an estimated £573,502 to creditors.

Aldona O' Hara, Investigation Leader, Insolvent Investigations Midlands & West at the Insolvency Service, said:

The Insolvency Service will rigorously pursue company directors who deliberately breach the trust of customers. Fair treatment of customers and creditors is essential for business confidence which is, in turn, essential for economic growth.

This disqualification is a reminder to others tempted to do the same that the Insolvency Service will rigorously pursue enforcement action to seek and remove from them the privilege of trading with limited liability to protect the public for a lengthy period.

Notes to editors

Choice Vehicles Ltd (CR0 No. 05438683) was incorporated on 28 April 2005 and traded from Wharf Farm, Trinity Marina, Coventry Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 0NB.

Kevin James Warland (date of birth: 2 April 1977) was the appointed director

from incorporation on 28 April 2005 to the date of the creditors' voluntary liquidation on 24 October 2014.

The company went into liquidation on 24 October 2014. On 9 June 2017, the County Court Sitting at Coventry made a Disqualification Order against Kevin James Warland, from 30 June 2017, for 10 years.

The matters of unfit conduct upon which the Secretary of State's claim was based were that:

Between 2 January 2014 and 31 July 2014, Kevin James Warland failed to ensure Choice Vehicles Ltd (Choice) adhered to the terms and conditions contained within its sale or return agreement's in respect of customer vehicles. As a result Choice sold five motor vehicles, but failed to remit the agreed amounts to customers. At the date of liquidation these five customers submitted claims in the liquidation proceedings totalling £174,450 in respect of monies owed to them.

Choice commenced trading in April 2005 as a seller of motor vehicles.

On 02 January 2014, Choice entered into a sale or return motor vehicle agreement with a customer, (Customer A) to sell the customer's vehicle for an agreed price of £73,000 and remit the agreed amount to the customer on sale of the vehicle within ten days of receipt of the proceeds in cleared funds. The subsequent agreed price was £68,000. On or around 14 April 2014 Choice sold the vehicle, but no monies were paid to Customer A within the specified ten days.

Following enforcement action taken by Customer A, on 22 July 2014 a County Court Judgment was registered against Choice for £70,426 and on 12 August 2014 a writ of control was obtained. Following enforcement action payments totalling £35,000 (includes legal costs and interest) were made to Customer A. At the date of liquidation, £47,502 (includes legal costs and interest) remained unpaid to Customer A.

On 26 April 2014, Choice entered into a sale or return motor vehicle agreement with a customer, (Customer B) to sell the customer's vehicle at an agreed price of £60,000. Choice also agreed to settle the outstanding finance due to a third party. The subsequent agreed price was £58,000. Choice sold the motor vehicle

and paid £4,400 to Customer B, but no monies were paid to settle the outstanding finance. At the date of liquidation £53,449 remained unpaid to the third party, which Customer B is paying personally. Customer B is a creditor in the Liquidation for £53,449.

On 30 May 2014, Choice entered into a sale or return motor vehicle agreement with a customer, (Customer C) to sell the customer's vehicle at an agreed price of £31,000 and remit the agreed amount to the customer on sale of the vehicle within ten days of receipt of the proceeds in cleared funds. The subsequent agreed price was £29,000. On 21 August 2014 Choice sold the vehicle but no monies were paid to the customer on sale of the vehicle. On 01 September 2014 by way of security Choice gave the customer a key and log book of a third party motor vehicle. This motor vehicle subsequently disappeared.

On 15 September 2014, Mr Warland entered into an instalment plan with Customer C to pay £29,500. Payments totalling £5,000 were made to the instalment plan and a further payment of £2,000 was made by Mr Warland. At the date of liquidation £22,500 remained unpaid to Customer C.

On 19 July 2014, Choice entered into a sale or return motor vehicle agreement with a customer, (Customer D) to sell the customer's vehicle at an agreed price of £19,000 and remit the agreed amount to the customer on sale of the vehicle within ten days of receipt of the proceeds in cleared funds. Choice sold the vehicle but no monies were paid to the customer on sale of the vehicle. At the date of liquidation the full amount of £19,000 remained unpaid to Customer D.

On 31 July 2014, Choice entered into a sale or return motor vehicle agreement with a customer, (Customer E) to sell the customer's vehicle for an agreed price of £33,000 and remit the agreed amount to the customer on sale of the vehicle within ten days of receipt of the proceeds in cleared funds. The subsequent agreed amount was £32,000. Choice sold the vehicle on or around 20 August 2014, but no monies were paid by Choice to Customer E. At the date of liquidation the full amount of £32,000 remained unpaid to Customer E.

At the date of liquidation a total of £174,450 remained unpaid to

these five customers.

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

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corporate-insolvency-effect-of-a-disqualification-order>

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 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[News story: New practice guide 78: overseas companies and limited liability partnerships](#)

Our new practice guide will help our customers meet the registration requirements for transactions involving overseas companies and overseas limited liability partnerships.

When overseas companies and limited liability partnerships acquire land and lend money on the security of land and property in England and Wales, our customers apply to register the transfer, lease, mortgage or a discharge of a mortgage with us.

Before we can update the register, we need to be satisfied that the overseas entity has:

- a legal personality distinct from its members
- power to own and deal with estates and interests in land in England and Wales
- made sure the deeds to which it is a party have been duly executed

Overlooking these requirements can delay an application or lead to it being cancelled.

Customers should [follow our new guide](#) to make sure their application is right first time, so that we can register the transaction as quickly as possible.

[News story: UK space companies to develop international partnerships to tackle global development challenges](#)

The UK Space Agency is working with research institutions, industry and non-profit organisations to develop strong international partnerships to help tackle economic, societal and environmental issues using satellite technology.

The Agency will award funding through its International Partnership Programme (IPP), which is designed to partner UK space expertise with overseas governments and organisations. It is part of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), which aims to support cutting-edge research and innovation that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries.

Ten small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and research organisations have been given a total of £338,000 to use to establish partnerships in countries including Zambia, Ethiopia and Vietnam.

Once the partnerships have been formed the companies can then develop their proposals which will then go to the IPP Call 2 to unlock further funding to put the plans into practice.

Earlier this year IPP Call 1 saw £70 million in funding given to projects in partnership with the UK space industry, applying inventive satellite

solutions to a range of areas such as deforestation, illegal fishing, marine pollution, disaster recovery, drought and flooding.

Call 2 for funding will close on 5 September 2017. The assessment is due to take place in October 2017 and successful projects will begin by the end of the year.

PDF, 241KB, 3 pages

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