

Press release: Wolverhampton father who planned fatal robbery will spend longer in prison

Colin Raymond Cooke, who conspired with his son Paul Cooke to commit a robbery that resulted in the victim's murder, has had his prison term extended following a referral by the Attorney General.

Mr Cooke Snr, 62, was sentenced in May before the Crown Court at Wolverhampton to 7 years imprisonment for the robbery offence, with 30 months imprisonment to be served concurrently for helping his son to avoid the police after committing a murder.

Repeat offender Paul Cooke was released from prison in May 2015. He visited his father later that day and the two plotted to rob the home of Cooke Snr's friend, who they knew hid cash in his home. The next evening, Paul Cooke entered the victim's home and stabbed him to death, making off with all the cash he and his accomplice could find.

The victim's decomposing body was not found until a month after the murder. DNA underneath the victim's fingernails linked the murder to Paul Cooke and an unknown male.

Mr Cooke Snr proceeded to dispose of his son's phone in an effort to hide him from the police.

Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP argued that the original sentence given to Cooke Snr was unduly lenient. The Court of Appeal has today increased his total sentence to 11 years and 6 months.

Speaking after the hearing, the Attorney General said: "This was a well planned robbery, where an innocent person has lost their life. The offender has also shown no remorse in the death of his friend. I am pleased the Court of Appeal has increased the sentence."

Press release: Strategic Defence and Security Review Implementation

The government has initiated work on a review of national security capabilities, in support of the ongoing implementation of the [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) (NSS & SDSR) which was published in November 2015.

The work will be led by Mark Sedwill, the National Security Adviser, with individual strands taken forward by cross-departmental teams, and will be carried out alongside continued implementation and monitoring of the 89 principal commitments set out in the NSS & SDSR.

The national security capability review will include examination of the policy and plans which support implementation of the national security strategy, and help to ensure that the UK's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible, to address current national security challenges. The review will also be informed by work which has already been commissioned in response to recent national security-related incidents.

The government is committed to report annually on progress in implementing the NSS & SDSR, and published its First Annual Report on implementation in December 2016. Further progress on implementation of the NSS & SDSR, and related work, will be reported in the Second Annual Report after the end of the second year of implementation.

As detailed in the [First Annual Report](#), the government will set out in subsequent annual reports where a significant change of approach in implementing the NSS & SDSR is considered necessary as a result of changes to the national security environment.

News story: New rules to keep the UK's reinsurance market competitive

New [regulations](#), published today (20 July 2017), introduce a competitive regulatory and tax regime for [Insurance Linked Securities](#) which will ensure that UK gets a share of this rapidly growing market.

Insurance Linked Securities allow insurance and reinsurance firms to transfer risk to the capital markets, meaning that risk can be managed more effectively for businesses and consumers.

Insurance Linked Securities, sometimes known as catastrophe bonds, are normally used to insure against extreme risks, such as earthquakes and hurricanes.

Over \$80 billion of Insurance Linked Securities have been issued to date, with over \$10 billion issued in 2017 alone. It is a rapidly growing market with research showing that it could grow to an estimated \$87 billion by 2019. The [regulations](#) will be laid before Parliament after summer recess and will come into force in the autumn of this year.

They set out how to establish special vehicles to issue Insurance Linked

Securities, the legal framework for Insurance Linked Securities, and the associated tax treatment. The regulations also provide for a tailored and proportionate approach to authorisation and supervision.

By publishing these regulations today the UK government is giving the insurance and reinsurance industry greater certainty in how the new regime will work— enabling them to be on the front foot in preparing for the new rules when they come into force in autumn.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Barclay said:

This new bespoke regime for Insurance Linked Securities will ensure the UK remains the most competitive insurance and reinsurance hub in the world.

This global business is evolving rapidly and we are determined to make sure we're part of this evolution.

Malcolm Newman, Chairman of the London Market Group's ILS Taskforce said:

The new ILS framework offers a very exciting future for the London Market to continue to deliver innovative new products that make a real difference. I am proud that the LMG has helped lead the development of these proposals.

We believe there is a real appetite in the London Market to invest in ILS products which will bring investors to the UK and make a significant contribution to growing the UK's trade.

Press release: £27million Northumberland flood scheme is complete

The final part of Morpeth's £27million flood alleviation scheme is complete.

Work to construct Cotting Burn dam was the last piece of work on the multi-million pound joint Environment Agency and Northumberland County Council flood scheme.

A drop-in event to thank residents for their patience throughout the construction took place on Friday 21 July.

Cotting Burn dam has been renamed "The Hargreaves Dam" in memory of RFCC Chairman Jon Hargreaves, who sadly passed away in October last year.

The dam works alongside other flood protection measures to reduce flood risk to around 1,000 properties in Morpeth.

Cotting Burn dam aerial image

New defences

To reduce the risk of flooding from the River Wansbeck, in-town defences were completed first, followed by the large upstream storage area at Mitford, which has already operated to protect the community. This year, tree poles were installed into the river near to Lowford Bridge to prevent large debris from reaching the town centre.

The construction of the new dam and storage area, which reduces the risk of flooding from the Cotting Burn, was finished in May and it is now operational.

It reduces the volume of water flowing downstream in large events. The screen on the dam also prevents debris from Cotting Wood from reaching the culvert and causing blockages.

Tree poles in the River Wansbeck

Separate work by Northumberland County Council to address surface water flooding at several locations in the town is underway and scheduled for completion by March 2018 at a cost of £1m.

This is being financed through a government grant from the Environment Agency and county council funding.

Scheme is 'biggest in the north east'

The Environment Agency's Alan Cadas, Operations Manager in the North East, said:

The Morpeth flood scheme is the biggest in the North East and boasts one of the largest flood storage areas the Environment Agency has ever built.

But this work on the Cotting Burn is equally important and works together with the other features to ensure Morpeth is protected from both the burn and the River Wansbeck.

This has been a great partnership involving local residents, who have played, and continue to play, a vital role in the success of the scheme. It shows that by working together with others we can create long term solutions to reduce the risk of flooding in our communities.

The large dam at Mitford

Partnership project

Northumberland County Council has played a key role, contributing £12million, making it one of the first schemes of this scale to be jointly delivered by partners.

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Northumberland County Council's Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services, said:

We're delighted this major joint scheme to protect the people of Morpeth is now complete.

This was a great example of agencies working together on a hugely ambitious engineering project and the fact it has already been used more than proves its worth.

One of the cornerstones of the scheme has been the help and support of the local community, and their input and engagement has been absolutely invaluable throughout.

It's important residents understand their flood risk and know what to do during a flood. For more information visit [the gov.uk website](#)

[News story: £16 million drive to boost maths skills for post Brexit Britain](#)

A £16 million [investment](#) to increase the quality of teaching in post-16 maths is part of major drive to see more students studying the subject after GCSE and ensure Britain's future workforce can compete in the global marketplace post Brexit.

Following a government-commissioned [review](#) by Professor Sir Adrian Smith about how to improve 16-18 maths education in England, Education Minister Nick Gibb has set out a series of actions to increase participation.

The introduction of a more rigorous maths curriculum, new AS and A level maths qualifications and high quality "core maths" qualifications are ensuring more young people are leaving education with the skills they need to secure their first job, an apprenticeship or go on to further study.

While maths continues to be the most popular subject at A level, with 88,000 [entries](#) in 2017, up 3 per cent on last year, almost [three quarters](#) of

students with an A*-C in GCSE maths at age 16 choose not to continue studying the subject.

In his review, Sir Adrian makes a strong case for the value of maths skills for all students, whichever route they take. He highlights, however, a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to drive up participation, including tackling the negative perceptions of maths. He has called on government, employers, universities, schools and colleges to take action so that more students choose to study the subject post-16.

Today's £16 million [announcement](#) will boost the capacity of schools, colleges and universities to deliver good quality teaching for post-16 maths courses including Core, A level and further maths.

Minister for Schools Standards Nick Gibb said:

A high-quality mathematics education provides young people with the knowledge and skills to secure a good job and to succeed in whatever path they choose.

We are already making progress with a more rigorous curriculum and this summer we will see young people collecting results in our new GCSEs, which are benchmarked against the best in the world.

There is, however, more to do to, particularly as we prepare to leave the European Union and compete globally. Sir Adrian's review will help us focus our efforts and today's investment is the first step on that vital journey.

As well as the investment in teaching, immediate action is already being taken in response to a number of the report's recommendations including:

- working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and the Royal Society Advisory Committee on maths education to ensure the design of the new T levels is based on expert mathematical advice
- working with the Royal Society and British Academy to encourage universities and employers to better promote the value of maths qualifications

Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London said:

I was delighted to conduct this review. There are compelling arguments for raising participation in students taking mathematics after the age of 16 and to improve skills at all levels. Increased participation could deliver significant payback for individuals, for the economy and in increased productivity. To achieve this will take effort, funding and a range of interventions from government that must be co-ordinated with other bodies.

The government has already announced plans to transform technical education in England, this includes developing new T levels, backed by £500 million of government investment announced in the budget, which will help deliver a world-class skills system which spreads opportunity for individuals and drives economic growth.

In addition to the immediate actions announced today, the government will consider the report carefully and will set out further details in due course of how it intends to address the range of recommendations outlined in the review.

Frank Kelly, Chair of the Royal Society Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education said:

We welcome Sir Adrian Smith's review of post-16 mathematics and look forward to working with the Department for Education and the Institute for Apprenticeships to increase access to and participation in maths.

Mathematics skills are necessary to a wide variety of disciplines and we welcome the government's recognition of their importance and commitment to improving opportunities in schools and colleges.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Chair of the High Level Strategy Group for Quantitative Skills at the British Academy said:

Adrian Smith's recommendations represent a positive step towards enabling the UK to rise to the challenge of becoming a data-literate nation. They will contribute to the cultural and structural changes within the education system which are required to enable quantitative skills to flourish at all levels to meet the diverse needs of society and the economy.