

Press release: Burglar who targeted the elderly jailed for longer

A burglar who targeted the elderly has sentence increased to 7 years and 6 months following ULS referral

A burglar who targeted the elderly will spend more time in prison after Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP referred his original sentence to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient.

Felix Joseph Hanrahan, 29, committed 13 burglaries in Durham and Northumbria. Posing as a water board official checking water supplies for contamination he managed to get into people's homes. He stole cash and jewellery with a total value of at least £2585.

Hanrahan deliberately targeted elderly, vulnerable people – many of whom lived alone. Some of the victims also suffered from medical conditions including dementia.

Hanrahan was originally sentenced to 3 years 9 months in prison at Newcastle upon Tyne Crown Court. He will now serve 7 years 6 months behind bars.

Speaking after the hearing, the Attorney General said:

“This was a planned operation with vulnerable, elderly people being the target. The original sentence failed to take proper account of the seriousness of this offending and the effect the burglaries had on the victims' lives. I am pleased the Court has increased the prison term.”

Press release: Demolition company fined for illegal waste site

A County Durham demolition company has been ordered to pay £6,180.46 after pleading guilty to breaking environmental laws.

PTS Demolition and Dismantling Ltd, which operates out of Hackworth Industrial Estate, Shildon, Bishop Auckland, was prosecuted for operating a waste transfer station without a permit at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on 5 July 2017. The court ruled it was a deliberate offence and ordered the firm to pay a fine of £3,500 and £2,680.46 costs.

The charges brought by the Environment Agency relate to the company's attempts to reduce costs by starting its own waste transfer station.

An Environment Officer and a colleague from Durham County Council visited the site in July 2014 to provide advice on how to apply for an environmental permit and planning permission to do this.

In 2015, Environment Officers visited a further five times to give additional advice and guidance. At the same time they recorded evidence that the company was operating a waste transfer station illegally, including storing 100 tonnes of crushed aggregate, 15 skips full of mixed waste and a store of fire extinguishers.

In February 2016, PTS Demolition submitted a permit application, which was returned for failing to include the application fee. Following a further visit by Environment Officers to give more advice, the company submitted another application. This was also returned for failing to include a Fire Prevention Plan (FPP). Again, officers provided advice on how to complete an FPP.

Officers returned to the site on 11 August 2016. The levels of waste had reduced but some skips of mixed waste remained, along with a number of wooden railway sleepers and a skip containing glass.

Company given ‘every possible opportunity’ to comply

Jamie Fletcher, Environment Agency Area Environment Manager, said:

The regulations exist to protect the environment, legitimate business and local communities from the risk of harm. Every business dealing in waste, whether they produce, carry, sort, recycle, ship or dispose of it, has a responsibility to fully understand and comply with environmental laws.

We gave PTS Demolition every possible opportunity and extensive support to comply. However, not only did they store waste illegally, the company repeatedly ignored advice and failed to shut down operations.

Those that repeatedly fail to comply with regulations pose a heightened risk to the environment and undermine legitimate business. In such circumstances we will have no hesitation prosecuting to ensure that waste crime doesn't pay.

[Press release: Major junction upgrade](#)

passes the halfway stage

Highways England is widening some of the approaches and slip roads at the junction and adding an extra lane to sections of the roundabout, increasing it from 2 to 3 lanes as part of an £8.3 million scheme.

Once the scheme is complete it will increase capacity, reduce congestion and improve safety for the thousands of drivers who use it every day.

Since the scheme started back in February Highways England has completed work on the inside of the roundabout which will form part of the additional lane and a new combined footpath and cycleway. Work has also been undertaken getting ready to install 2 new 'superspan' gantries which will cross both carriageways on the M1.

Work will now start on the outside of the roundabout with the narrow lanes being moved on to the new section of surface from Saturday 22 July. This will also allow the new pedestrian crossings to be completed.

Highways England project manager Derek Dobinson said:

Work is progressing well at the junction which acts as a major route into Leeds city centre and is the main access for a number of major businesses. Over the next few months we will continue work on the widening of the northbound entry slip road, add an extra lane on to the southbound entry slip road so traffic can merge easily from the roundabout and start work on the A63 approach.

Most of the work will continue to be carried out during the day. However, there will be some overnight closures to put in the new gantries, which display advice for drivers and for resurfacing of the junction. These will be advertised closer to the time.

There will be overnight closures on Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 July to remove the equipment which was installed on the current gantries which only span one side between 8pm and 6am.

While the scheme is ongoing there is a reduced speed limit of 50mph on the M1 and a 30mph limit on the slip roads and roundabout.

Further information about the project which is due to be completed in winter can be found on the [scheme website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Press release: Major milestone for A21 upgrade as new flyover opens

The work is part of a project to upgrade the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury to a new dual carriageway, speeding up journeys and boosting the economy.

Drivers using the A21 through the Longfield junction will no longer need to stop at the old Longfield roundabout as the new flyover partially opens, with one lane open in each direction. It is the latest in a series of milestones achieved by the Highways England-led project team in recent months, and follows the reopening of Tonbridge Road in April and moving traffic on to new structures near Fairthorne village in June.

The new flyover at the Longfield Road junction will remove the need for drivers continuing on the A21 to stop at the old Longfield roundabout

Highways England Project Manager Anne-Marie Palmer said:

Over the last few months we've made real progress with the construction of the new flyovers at Fairthorne and Longfield Road. Opening the new flyover at the Longfield Road junction will reduce congestion by removing the need for drivers continuing on the A21 to stop at the old Longfield roundabout. Later this summer we will be opening both lanes of the dual carriageway, which is when the benefits of this major improvement will really be noticed.

Earlier this year, Tonbridge Road reopened to traffic between the Longfield junction and Pembury hospital. The bridge at the new Fairthorne junction partially opened in June allowing construction of the new access road for residents along Pembury Walks and Half Moon Lane.

George Pargeter, Balfour Beatty Project Director for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Project, added:

We are very pleased with the progress on the A21 given the complex nature of this project. The partial opening of the Longfield Flyover is set to transform journeys for local residents by providing a more streamlined route for drivers continuing on the

A21 and is a testament to the skills and expertise of the project team.

The Longfield flyover will fully open to traffic – providing two lanes to traffic in both directions – later this summer when the new dual carriageway opens.

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[News story: Jem Eskenazi joins UK Export Finance as Chief Technology Officer](#)

At UKEF, Jem will act as a champion for digital technologies within UKEF, responsible for innovation and adoption of new technologies as the department further develops its digital support for exports.

Jem brings significant experience of digital innovation in the international finance industry, having previously worked for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as its Information Technology Managing Director.

Prior to this Jem has also held several Chief Information Officer posts, as well as undertaking various Non-Executive Director roles. He has experience in a number of geographic regions and industries, including financial services, mobile telecommunications, medical systems, industrial gases and pharmaceuticals.

Throughout his career, he has focused on the strategic evolution of IT functions, projects and roles, with a particular focus on improving integration with other departments.

Bhaskar Dasgupta, Chief Operating Officer at UKEF, said:

We're delighted to welcome Jem to UKEF as Chief Technology Officer,

with his extensive experience of delivering user-centred digital services. His pioneering approach to information technology teams and systems will ensure we in UKEF can continue to make exports happen by driving innovative technological solutions across the business.

Jem Eskenazi, Chief Technology Officer at UKEF, added:

UKEF provides competitive, innovative and flexible support for exports for firms of any size, in any sector. It therefore needs internal and external digital infrastructure that meets requirements as diverse and dynamic as the customers we support. I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead the organisation's next phases in IT efficiency and innovation.