

Attorney General seeks clarification on the law following protest case

News story

The Attorney General has decided to refer questions of law to the Court of Appeal concerning the proper scope of defences to criminal charges arising from protests.



The Attorney General, the Rt. Hon. Suella Braverman QC MP, has decided to refer questions of law to the Court of Appeal concerning the proper scope of defences to criminal charges arising from protests, and the directions which should be given to juries in such cases.

The referral relates to the Colston statue protest. The Attorney has concluded that this case has led to uncertainty regarding the interaction between the offence of criminal damage and the rights relevant to protest peacefully. The Attorney's action will not overturn the acquittals in this case.

The Court of Appeal will be asked to clarify the law around whether someone can use a defence related to their human rights when they are accused of criminal damage. The Court will also consider whether juries should be asked to decide if a conviction for criminal damage is a 'proportionate interference' with the human rights of the accused, particularly the right to protest and freedom of expression. In the Colston statue case, the judge directed the jury that, before they could convict, they must be sure that doing so would be a 'proportionate interference' (in other words compatible) with the defendants' exercise of their rights to freedom of thought and to freedom of expression.

Acting independently of Government, in her role as the Guardian of the Public Interest, the Attorney General made the decision in the interests of future cases involving the same point of law.

Since 2000, there have been 19 instances of this power being used by Attorneys General. The last time this power was used was in December 2020

when the Attorney clarified the law in relation to sexual assault.

Commenting on her decision, the Attorney General said:

After careful consideration, I have decided to refer the Colston statue case to the Court of Appeal to clarify the law around protests.

Trial by jury is an important guardian of liberty and critical to that are the legal directions given to the jury. It is in the public interest to clarify the points of law raised in these cases for the future. This is a legal matter which is separate from the politics of the case involved.

- The Attorney has the power to ask the Court of Appeal for clarification on important points of law in some cases where a defendant has been acquitted at trial – which means ‘found not guilty’. The Criminal Justice Act 1972 provides the Attorney General with a power to refer a point of law to the Court of Appeal.
- The Attorney has referred one defendant (who cannot be named for legal reasons) from the Colston prosecution to the Court. This is because their case contains all of the issues which the Attorney wants the Court to clarify the law on. The individual’s acquittal is unaffected.
- The Questions asked of the Court of Appeal are as follows:
 1. Does the offence of criminal damage fall within that category of offences, identified in *James v DPP* [2016] 1 WLR 2118 and *DPP v Cuciurean* [2022] EWHC 736 (Admin), where conviction for the offence is – intrinsically and without the need for a separate consideration of proportionality in individual cases – a justified and proportionate interference with any rights engaged under Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (‘the Convention’)? If not, and it is necessary to consider human rights issues in individual cases of criminal damage:
 2. What principles should judges in the Crown Court apply when determining whether the qualified rights found in Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Convention are engaged by the potential conviction of defendants purporting to be carrying out an act of protest? And
 3. If those rights are engaged, under what circumstances should any question of proportionality be withdrawn from a jury?
- More information about the last time this power was used is available [here](#).

[Factsheet: the Attorney General’s Referral of a Protest Case to the Court of Appeal](#) (PDF, 89.6 KB, 1 page)

New independent commissioner appointed by Geospatial Commission

The Geospatial Commission is delighted to announce that distinguished Professor Louise Heathwaite CBE of Lancaster University joined our Board of Commissioners on 1 April 2022 replacing Kru Desai.

The Chair of the Geospatial Commission, Sir Bernard Silverman, said:

I welcome the appointment of Professor Louise Heathwaite to the Geospatial Commission's Board of Commissioners. Louise brings a wealth of experience in environmental science and [land management](#) that will be invaluable in helping us set our priorities for improving the interoperability of land use data and advancing our scientific capability.

I would like to convey my gratitude to Kru Desai for her significant contribution to the Geospatial Commission since its near inception.

Professor Louise Heathwaite said:

I am delighted to be joining the Geospatial Commission at such an important time. It has huge potential to influence some of the pivotal challenges ahead of us relating to achieving net zero and ensuring we go beyond the government's levelling up agenda to deliver 'levelling out'.

The UK's geospatial data and our geospatial capabilities are first class and our success will depend on exploiting the potential of interoperable locational data that integrates the needs of government departments.

The Geospatial Commission sets the UK's geospatial strategy and promotes the best use of geospatial data to drive productivity, promote economic growth and improve the delivery of public services, while safeguarding considerations such as national security and intellectual property rights. The Geospatial Commission's Board of Commissioners are appointed through an open competition and provide impartial advice to the government.

The Board meets formally up to six times per year and has nine members:

- Sir Bernard Silverman (Chair)
- Nigel Clifford (Deputy Chair)
- Thalia Baldwin (Director, Geospatial Commission)
- Edwina Dunn (Independent Commissioner)
- Professor Louise Heathwaite (Independent Commissioner)
- Alex Notay (Independent Commissioner)
- Steve Unger (Independent Commissioner)

Karen Hanghoj (Director, British Geological Survey) and Peter Sparkes (Chief Executive, UK Hydrographic Office) are the two commissioners nominated by the Partner Bodies of the Geospatial Commission to represent them collectively.

Professor Louise Heathwaite Biography

Louise is Distinguished Professor of Environmental Science and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise at Lancaster University. She is a hydrologist and hydrochemist by training. Her research has contributed to our understanding of how freshwater biodiversity responds to environmental pollution and has informed policy-interventions on land use and management designed to improve water quality.

Louise was awarded a CBE in 2018 for services to scientific research and scientific advice to the government and elected Fellow of The Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2015. Louise is a highly regarded leader in the environmental sciences, which is reflected in appointments to UKRI Natural Environment Research Council (2018-2021); the Royal Society Global Environment Research Committee (2018-) and election as President of the Freshwater Biological Association in 2017.

Louise was appointed Chair of Defra's Science Advisory Council in 2021 and to the advisory board of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund on Transforming Food Production in 2018, where she has helped develop a better understanding of the social as well as the financial barriers to the uptake of innovation in the UK food production sector.

She has direct experience of providing expert, impartial advice to government as Chief Scientific Adviser to the Scottish Government on Rural Affairs, Food and Environment from 2012-2017. In 2019 she led the Heathwaite Review: an independent review of the Scottish Funding Council's £0.5 Billion 15-year investment in research pooling of STEM disciplines.

[3,000 jobs created in one year by](#)

'resilient' UK space sector

Employment in the UK space sector hit 46,995 in 2020, up from 44,040 in 2019: an increase of 2,955 (6.7%).

Sector income increased in nominal terms from £16.4 billion to £16.5 billion, with exports counting for around a third (32%) of this total. Space manufacturing, including satellites, spacecraft, launch vehicles and scientific instruments, grew the most in real terms; up by £23 million to £2.27 billion.

In line with the UK Government's commitment to increasing public and private R&D spending, investment in research and development saw a 19% boost to £836 million.

Levelling up the space sector is a key priority for the UK Space Agency and there are now 1,293 space organisations located across the UK, with Scotland responsible for around one fifth of the entire UK space workforce. Employment in the sector grew from 7,703 to 8,440 in Scotland, from 415 to 1,109 in Wales, and from 113 to 431 in Northern Ireland.

Spaceports in Scotland, Wales and England are expected to generate more jobs in the coming years, alongside the growth of regional space clusters, international investment, and emerging technologies such as in-space manufacturing and debris removal, supported by the National Space Strategy.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

The £16.5 billion space sector is a major contributor to a strong and secure UK economy, and it's promising to see it generate thousands of new high-skilled jobs in the face of global economic headwinds.

We're backing this innovative and resilient industry through the largest ever increase to R&D spending, which includes a significant uplift to the UK Space Agency's budget, and the delivery of the UK's first National Space Strategy.

As we support new SpaceTech clusters from Spaceports in Cornwall and Scotland to satellite manufacturing and robotics from Glasgow to Warwick to Stevenage, this will help level-up the UK. Looking ahead to the first satellite launches from the UK this year, this is an exciting time for this high growth sector up and down the country.

The figures published today come from the 'Size and Health of the UK Space Industry 2021' survey, conducted by BryceTech on behalf of the UK Space Agency.

Confidence in the face of global challenges

When adjusted for inflation, the total income of the sector dropped marginally in real terms by 1.7% in 2020, compared to a 9.9% drop in the wider UK economy over the same period, caused predominantly by the Covid-19 pandemic. Fewer live sports broadcasts had a negative impact on satellite broadcasting services, while travel restrictions temporarily reduced demand for mobile satellite services from maritime companies and airlines.

Despite these challenges, confidence within the sector remains high, with more than three-quarters (79%) of organisations predicting a rise in income over the next three years, 74% expecting further increases in employment, and more than half (53%) expecting growth in space exports.

Dr Paul Bate, CEO of the UK Space Agency, said:

The UK space sector has shown remarkable resilience in the face of challenges presented by the pandemic, thanks to the incredible efforts of all those within it, and its future is a bright and ambitious one.

We continue to work closely with partners across the industry, with academia and our colleagues across government to catalyse further investment, deliver new space capabilities and missions, and champion space for the good of humanity. This will help us overcome challenges, drive forward the pace of innovation and bring tangible benefits to people and businesses.

Catalysing investment

The survey also analysed UK space investments over the past decade, finding that 145 unique investors in 38 companies invested nearly £6 billion across 90 investment deals, between 2012 and 2021.

There has been a recent increase in this activity with the launch of the Seraphim Space Investment Trust in 2021, and a newly announced \$50 million space and tech fund from US venture capital firm, Type One. Following the success of its funding round for Wales-based Space Forge last year, Type One has opened a UK office to manage ongoing investment and support early-stage space companies in the UK and Europe.

Will Whitehorn, President of UKspace, said:

UKspace is delighted to see that, despite the many issues faced by all industries over the last two years, opportunities within the space sector have continued to grow.

We see the evidence within our membership of exciting new enterprises, significant collaborations and the development of

projects which provide benefits across society.

The space sector has the ability to improve the lives of people across the globe, and this report demonstrates that the UK is at the forefront of that movement.

Kevin Craven, Chief Executive of ADS, said:

This report highlights the significant and important contribution the space sector makes to the UK.

The UK possesses major strengths and capabilities, including in satellite technology and manufacturing, which, underpinned by the National Space Strategy and the Defence Space Strategy, supports the sector's bright, long-term future.

2022 will be an exciting year for space and advancing projects, such as the UK's first spaceports, will enable and support increased regional prosperity and employment in this flourishing sector.

Howard Nye FRAeS, President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, said:

Given modern-day societies' dependence on space infrastructure and services, both in the civil and defence domains, and the high return to the UK economy from government investment in space technology and space systems, this report provides strong evidence of the UK's continuing determination to remain a key player both as the fourth largest contributor to the European Space Agency, as well as in partnership with its allies around the world.

The report also provides clear evidence of the UK Government's call for levelling up employment opportunities across the UK, which must continue through encouraging young people to enter the space domain.

[PM statement: 12 April 2022](#)

Today I have received a fixed penalty notice from the Metropolitan Police relating to an event in Downing Street on 19th June 2020, and let me say immediately that I have paid the fine and I once again offer a full apology.

And in a spirit of openness and humility, I want to be completely clear about what happened on that date.

My day began shortly after 7am, and I chaired eight meetings in No10, including the Cabinet Committee deciding Covid strategy, I visited a school in Hemel Hempstead, which took me out of Downing Street for over four hours.

And amongst all these engagements, on a day that happened to be my birthday, there was a brief gathering in the Cabinet Room shortly after 2pm, lasting for less than 10 minutes, during which people I work with kindly passed on their good wishes.

And I have to say in all frankness, at the time, it did not occur to me that this might have been a breach of the rules.

But of course the police have found otherwise and I fully respect the outcome of their investigation.

I understand the anger that many will feel that I myself fell short when it came to observing the very rules which the Government I lead had introduced to protect the public, and I accept in all sincerity that people had a right to expect better.

Now I feel an even greater sense of obligation to deliver on the priorities of the British people:

strengthening our economy,

creating jobs and opportunities,

levelling up the whole United Kingdom,

now, of course, ensuring that Putin fails in Ukraine, and easing the burden imposed on hard-working families caused by higher energy prices.

I will take forward that task with due humility, but with maximum determination to fulfil my duty and do what is best for the country I serve.

PM call with President Biden: 12 April 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, this afternoon.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, this afternoon.

The Prime Minister updated President Biden on his recent visit to Kyiv, and said he had been humbled by President Zelenskyy's strength and resolve.

The leaders discussed the need to accelerate assistance to Ukraine, including bolstering military and economic support, as the Ukrainian forces prepare for another Russian onslaught in the east of the country.

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the US' colossal military contribution to Ukraine, and updated on the UK's new package of support, including anti-ship missiles and military vehicles, which would arrive in the coming days and weeks.

Both leaders were clear that Putin would never be able to hold down the spirit of the Ukrainian people, despite his monstrous attempts.

The Prime Minister said that a long-term commitment to Ukraine was needed from the international community to ensure the Ukrainian people's vision for their country's freedom could be realised again, and the leaders discussed how the US and UK could work together with allies to achieve that.

The pair also agreed to continue joint efforts to ratchet up the economic pressure on Putin and decisively end Western reliance on Russian oil and gas.

The Prime Minister also expressed his sympathies to President Biden and the American people following the attack in New York City this morning. Both leaders agreed to stay in touch in the coming weeks.

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