

WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3)(a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Statement of **Ian WOOD** URN:

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Age if under 18 **Over 18** (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: **Police Sergeant**.....

This statement (consisting of 3 pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature:

Date: 20/12/2015

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (*supply witness details on rear*)

This community impact statement is made in relation to the ongoing issues experienced in CAMBRIDGE CITY CENTRE, which are attributed to Punt Touts.

I am the person named above, and I am an employee of CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY in the office of Police Sergeant. Since July 2014, I have worked in the Cambridge City Centre Problem-Solving Team – where I am tasked to address anti-social behaviour, public safety issues and criminality that affects the local community. The large majority of my work entails working with key partner agents, such as CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL and various other enforcement agencies.

Upon starting my role as the City Centre PST Sergeant, I undertook a handover from Sergeant Paul STREET – so I was aware of the issues affecting the City Centre area, and the safeguarding and control tactics adopted to address them. I also chose to speak to Sergeant Andrea GILBERT and Inspector Mike BARNSHAW who have also previously held the same post, in order to ensure that I got a global understanding of what issues and tactics had previously been discussed - going back over a period of several years. One common theme from all three Supervisors was that of Punt Touts – essentially people selling boating trips on the RIVER CAM (either chauffeured or unescorted).

Punts are flat-bottomed boats, designed for use in small rivers and shallow water - which are hand-propelled by a pole against the riverbed. They were originally built as cargo boats or platforms, but nowadays they are used almost exclusively for pleasure-trips with passengers. As the RIVER CAM runs past some of the iconic universities in CAMBRIDGE, punt tours attracts tourists on an international scale.

Unfortunately, the behaviour of some of the Punt Touts selling these tours are perceived as an endemic anti-social behaviour issue unique to CAMBRIDGE CITY CENTRE that has been causing problems for residents, businesses and visitors alike for a significant period of time.

Signature: Signature witnessed by:

Continuation of Statement of **PS Ian WOOD 2411**.....

I have fully researched the issue by speaking to CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL, THE CAM CONSERVANCY, Sgt GILBERT and a lot of the Punt Touts themselves. I understand that the RIVER CAM is managed by the CAM CONSERVATORS, and that they work closely with CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL to ensure that the water-way and banks are safe for the public to enjoy. Although it is perfectly legal to 'Tout' for business (provided the Tout is not causing an annoyance to anyone), there are both licensed and unlicensed companies that operate in the City Centre area – which are often hard to distinguish to a lay visitor. Since April 2012, it is a legal requirement for a Punt Tour company in the City to be licensed by the CAM CONSERVATORS – often requiring registration fees, robust insurance policies and stringent health and safety checks; they must also adhere to a voluntary code of practice surrounding their Tout activities. There are currently six authorised punt stations in Cambridge – based at JESUS GREEN, QUAYSIDE, TRINITY COLLEGE, MILL POND, MILL LANE and GRANTA MILL POND, and tickets can also be purchased from the TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE at the GUILDHALL, MARKET HILL.

Everyone I spoke to stated that the Punting trade is an extremely lucrative business. In terms of initial outlay, I understand that a Punt costs approximately £5000 to build – but some are leased out for the season by silent partners. It is alleged that some of the Punting companies do not pay mooring fees or are inadequately insured – so the only other major financial outlay is their Staffing and occasional maintenance of the punts.

In terms of revenue, the figures quoted were quite shocking: during the 2015 season, a typical Punt Tour will cost one passenger in excess of £10. One Punt can carry up to twelve passengers, and will run in excess of thirteen tours per day. Put simply, £10 x 12 passengers x 13 tours equals over fifteen hundred pounds in revenue PER DAY – with minimal overheads. Typically the peak punting-season runs from April through to October each year, but it is not uncommon to see Punts on the river throughout the year.

Although there are only a small number of Punt Tour companies in CAMBRIDGE overall, the Owners will employ a considerable amount of people to tout for business and chauffeur their punts. As a consequence, the RIVER CAM is overly-congested by punts and other river-vessels – particularly during the summer season. This is further exacerbated by the lack of suitable mooring and loading and offloading space along the banks throughout the City Centre area. Similarly as this is seasonal work, it is difficult to monitor those employed in the industry – as they are extremely transient and tend to be paid cash in hand.

Having lived, socialised and worked in CAMBRIDGE for the past seven years I was aware that Punt Touts attracted a great deal of criticism and scorn in the local community – and I have personally experienced the inconvenience and frustration caused by Touts trying to 'hard sell' such tours in the City centre area. Frequent reports to the Police and Council suggest that some of these Touts are extremely pushy and obstruct members of public in a bid to secure a sale; often becoming abusive and derogatory if a tour is refused.

On any given day, I would moderately estimate that there are in excess of forty different Punt Touts operating in

Signature: Signature witnessed by:

Continuation of Statement of **PS Ian WOOD 2411**.....

the City. The large majority of Punt Touts tend to operate from the areas of KINGS PARADE and RIVERSIDE, but have recently spread further afield to PETTY CURY and MARKET SQUARE. It is extremely difficult to walk from one end of the City Centre to the other without being approached at least once by one of these aforementioned Touts.

The Touts generate business by approaching members of the public (usually Visitors to the City), and then lead their customers to a Punt moored nearby where the sale is finalised. Bookings are made either in the street, or can now be made online in advance. Although there are inevitable questions about taxation, licensing and mooring fees – my primary concern is that of public safety. Despite some of the Touts claiming they are adequately insured to carry passengers, this is unlikely due to the fact that they are not appropriately licensed. I would also question how well customers are triaged in respect of their ability to swim or navigate a large cumbersome punt through unfamiliar and congested waterways. Because some of the Punt Tout companies are unlicensed, there is no ombudsman available to customers who have a bad experience with Punt Touts. As such, I understand that disputes over refunds, unsatisfactory health and safety issues or customer service are often mistakenly referred to the Council. I would also suggest that only a small fraction of complaints are ever made, as the Customer is usually a day-visitor to the City. This is also why local partner agencies are keen to ensure common standards are being adhered to by everyone.

Due to the lucrative work but limited physical space available, competition for customers has become a major issue for the Touts - which has frequently devolved into allegations of assault and criminal damage; which usually take place in a very public arena. As a natural consequence, our research has also discovered that the large majority of the known Punt Touts have criminal convictions for a wide variety of offences – ranging from drug possession, theft, serious assaults and even sexual offences, which could also be potentially detrimental to the image of the City – given some of the Touts previous behaviour.

Historically, a wide range of different tactics have been employed by CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY, CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL and the CAM CONSERVANCY in a bid to curb the anti-social behaviour and criminality associated with the Punt Touts – ranging from enforcement patrols, public awareness campaigns, and pursuing legal action. We have even tried to dissuade local Students for working for the Punt Touts – by making them aware of the fact that they could potentially be liable for prosecution if caught. Unfortunately the lure of a pleasant working environment and a potentially astronomical income has done little to impact on this situation.

I have been asked to prepare this Community Impact Statement by CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL on the understanding that a Public Spaces Protection Order is being considered to combat the antisocial behaviour caused by Punt Touts in CAMBRIDGE CITY CENTRE. I wholeheartedly welcome this initiative, as it would enable enforcement Officers to take positive action against those Touts who cause a misery to people in the City Centre – and would encourage Visitors to gravitate back towards legitimate punting stations.

Signature: Signature witnessed by:

RESTRICTED – FOR POLICE AND PROSECUTION ONLY
(when completed)

Home address:

c/o CAMBRIDGE CITY CENTRE PROBLEM-SOLVING TEAM, PARKSIDE POLICE STATION, PARKSIDE, CAMBRIDGE..... Postcode: **CB1 1JG**.....

Home telephone number **n/a**..... Work telephone number **101**.....

Mobile/pager number **n/a**..... Email address:

Preferred means of contact: **As Above**.....

Male / ~~Female~~ (delete as applicable) Date and place of birth: **n/a**.....

Former name: **n/a**..... Height: **n/a**..... Ethnicity Code:

Dates of witness non-availability

Witness care

- a) Is the witness willing and likely to attend court? **Yes**. If 'No', include reason(s) on MG6. What can be done to ensure attendance?
- b) Does the witness require 'special measures' as a vulnerable or intimidated witness? **No**. If 'Yes' submit MG2 with file.
- c) Does the witness have any specific care needs? **No**. If 'Yes' what are they? (Healthcare, childcare, transport, disability, language difficulties, visually impaired, restricted mobility or other concerns?)

Witness Consent (for witness completion)

- a) The criminal justice process and Victim Personal Statement scheme (victims only) has been explained to me Yes No
- b) I have been given the leaflet 'Giving a witness statement to police — what happens next?' Yes No
- c) I consent to police having access to my medical records in relation to this matter: Yes No N/A
- d) I consent to my medical record in relation to this matter being disclosed to the defence: Yes No N/A
- e) I consent to the statement being disclosed for the purposes of civil proceedings e.g. child care proceedings (if applicable) Yes No N/A
- f) The information recorded above will be disclosed to the Witness Service so they can offer help and support, unless you ask them not to. Tick this box to decline their services:

Signature of witness:

Statement taken by (print name): **PS Ian WOOD 2411**

Station: **PARKSIDE POLICE STATION**

Time and place statement taken: **1400hrs, PARKSIDE POLICE STATION**

Signature of witness: