

Regulator finds mismanagement at Revelation Foundation



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In a report published today, the Charity Commission is highly critical of the charity Revelation Foundation, after uncovering flaws in its structure and serious governance failings that amount to mismanagement by its trustees.

Revelation Foundation is involved in creating and broadcasting Christian content programmes for television.

The Commission opened an inquiry into the charity in 2014 following concerns raised by the public that the charity was being used for private advantage. The charity had recently moved most of its operations to Spain, and in doing so, had developed an overly complex operating structure.

The Commission found no evidence to support the allegation of private advantage, but its investigation instead exposed a series of governance failings on the part of the charity.

These failings included decision-making processes that were inadequate such as not obtaining professional advice before key decisions, badly managed conflicts of interest and poor financial oversight.

The regulator also found the charity's founder Howard Conder, who had links to companies involved in the delivery of the charity's activities and was a significant donor, held a disproportionate influence over the trustees.

As a consequence of the governance failures, the charity developed an unwieldy structure which placed a significant proportion of the charity's assets beyond its direct control and therefore at risk.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Charity Commission, said:

The public expects each charity to show that they are doing their bit to uphold public trust in charity more generally. This starts with trustees being able to clearly show how they are acting in their charity's best interests and for its beneficiaries.

Our inquiry found the trustees of Revelation Foundation could not show why decisions were taken or how they had acted in their charity's best interests and that of its beneficiaries. Instead they demonstrated weak governance and oversight and ultimately left themselves open to allegations they were making decisions in their own interests. Whilst our inquiry didn't find evidence of this, our work does demonstrate the importance of good governance and transparency to prevent a charity being exposed to undue risk. We hope other charities will look to this as an example of why effective governance is so important.

The Commission appointed an interim manager to the charity in June 2015. The report acknowledges there was a significant delay during which the inquiry sought updates from the interim manager and the trustees' concern that he had been in very limited contact with them. The interim manager was discharged in September 2018 on conclusion of his work.

The charity has, as a result of this inquiry, made many significant improvements to its governance arrangements, which includes Howard Condor stepping back from the charity and the trustees gaining a clearer understanding of their role and responsibilities.

The Commission will continue to monitor the charity.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

- When the charity moved to Spain many Christian broadcasters were operating from the country at the time and so this was not an unusual decision.

- The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.

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