

Investigation into charities run by designated person results in over £1.3m redistributed to good causes

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The Charity Commission has concluded its statutory inquiries into the Kantor Foundation and Kantor Charitable Foundation, finding neither charity remained viable after the designation of the charities' founder, Dr Vitacheslav Kantor.

Both charities were set up to provide grants to projects and causes in any part of the world as long as they were exclusively charitable. The charities shared a sole corporate trustee, which was a private limited company known as Kantor Trustees. One of the company's directors, sole member, and the charities' primary funder was Dr Kantor.

Background

In April 2022, the UK Government named Dr Kantor as a 'designated person' under the UK's Russia Sanctions regime. This meant that it was now a criminal offence for funds or economic resources in the UK to be made available to Dr Kantor.

In the same month, the Commission opened inquiries into charities connected to Dr Kantor, these were: the Kantor Charitable Foundation (KCF), Kantor Foundation (KF) and the World Holocaust Forum Foundation (WHFF). The regulator froze charity bank accounts and prevented the trustee from parting with any of the charity's property without the Commission's prior consent. In May 2022, the regulator removed Dr Kantor as a trustee of WHFF meaning he was automatically disqualified from being a trustee and ceased to be a director of Kantor Trustees.

Findings

In June 2023, the inquiries concluded that the Kantor Foundation and Kantor Charitable Foundation were no longer viable and that they should be wound up and dissolved. The inquiries reached this view having taken into consideration that Dr Kantor was the sole donor and it would be unlikely that either charity could secure future funding. There were also no trustees to run the charities following Dr Kantor's designation and subsequent resignation of the other directors from the Kantor Trustees company.

The inquiries also determined that reputational damage arising from the designation, meant that it would be unlikely that the charities could resolve these matters through fundraising or recruitment.

The inquiries found that Dr Kantor was responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of both charities for failing to proactively resign following his designation.

Dr Kantor's failure to cooperate with the regulator's investigation also amounted to misconduct and/or mismanagement.

Recovery of funds

In May 2022, the regulator appointed Interim Managers to both charities as there were no longer any trustees running the charity. As part of their work to wind up the charities, they identified a

number of outstanding Gift Aid claims were owed. After settling the charities' liabilities, the Interim Managers distributed the remaining funds via charitable grants to several organisations, in line with the charities' purposes. The total figure distributed to support charitable causes amounts to £1,388,000.00.

The Interim Managers also recovered a violin made by Italian violin maker, Riccardo Antoniazzi, which had been on loan from the Kantor Foundation. The violin – valued by the Foundation in 2019 as being worth £150,810 – has since been gifted to a registered charity. The terms of the gift stipulates that the violin must be used to promote musical education for the public benefit.

The charities have both been wound up and have since been removed from the public Register of Charities.

Joshua Farbridge, Head of compliance and visits and inspections at the Charity Commission, said:

Once designated, an individual cannot legally act as a trustee. Dr Kantor's failure to step down immediately, his decision to ignore the Commission and failure to cooperate, amounted to misconduct and/or mismanagement.

It also fell below our expectations of trustees. As a result of our investigations, we have now wound up both charities.

We are pleased some good can come to other charities and causes as a result of our intervention. Instead of assets lying dormant, or owed Gift Aid lost, we've been able to see a much-needed boost of over £1.3m into the sector, and a culturally significant musical instrument gifted to a charity furthering musical education.

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its ambition is to be an expert regulator that is fair, balanced, and independent so that charity can thrive. This ambition will help to create and sustain an environment where charities further build public trust and ultimately fulfil their essential role in enhancing lives and strengthening society. More information is available on gov.uk.
2. On 7 April 2022, the Commission opened statutory inquiries into the Kantor Foundation and Kantor Charitable Foundation under section 46 of the Charities Act 2011.
3. The full report into the Kantor Foundation and Kantor Charitable Foundation is available on gov.uk.
4. The Commission concluded its inquiry into the World Holocaust Forum Foundation in December 2023. The full report is on gov.uk.

5. More information on the UK's Russia Sanctions regime, and what this sets out in law, can be found here: The Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/investigation-into-charities-run-by-designated-person-results-in-over-13m-redistributed-to-good-causes>