

PRESS RELEASE

20th August 2008

ASSAULT CASES ON CIVIL ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS GO TO CROWN COURT

Last week, Steven Pratley of Tooting, London was found guilty at Kingston Crown Court of Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) against Syed Hyder, a Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) employed by APCOA under the on-street enforcement contract they operate for Wandsworth Council. His brother Lee Jones, also charged with ABH was found "not guilty".

Mr Hyder was left unconscious outside the Gardiner's Arms pub in Battersea, following his request that a car was moved on from yellow lines outside a wake being held at the Gardiner's Arms in Battersea. He was initially in a coma and spent 2 days in hospital and is still affected by the assault a year later.

The sentencing will take place next month, but the judge warned: "Mr Pratley should be under no illusion about the likely outcome, because somebody who attacks someone in the sort of public job that a [traffic warden] does is almost inevitably facing an immediate custodial sentence."

A spokesperson for APCOA said "We accept that Mr Pratley and Mr Jones cases have been heard by a Crown Court jury, who arrived at a verdict for both men. Although we gain no pleasure from knowing that Mr Pratley will have a criminal record, we believe that there has been some acknowledgement of the wrongs that were done to Syed and the fact that his life has been affected by Mr Pratley's actions. Using violence against anyone who is carrying out their daily duties serving the community is both morally and socially unacceptable."

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Wandsworth Council's executive member for planning and transportation, Cllr Guy Senior said "Civil enforcement officers play a key role in ensuring that people can use the capital's roads as smoothly and safely as possible.

We in Wandsworth take this very seriously and we support the prosecution of anyone who assaults our contractors' staff."

A further Crown Court case this week was cancelled following the change of plea from "not guilty" to "guilty. Cameron Johnson of Kingston upon Thames, who set two of his Rotwielier dogs on to APCOA's CEO Peter Gayle, decided to change his plea to guilty to the assault and as a result was sentence to five months in custody.

Mr Gayle was assaulted on the Lettsom Estate in Camberwell, Southwark in August 2007. As a result he needed urgent medical attention by paramedics and was taken to Kings College for further treatment. Mr Gayle has since recovered from his injuries and has returned back to work. The trial was due to commence on the 18th August at The Inner London Crown Court.

The Judge in Mr Cameron's case said "I have to set an example to the public that they can not get away with assaulting public servants who are merely trying to carry out a service to the residents. The courts duty is to support our public servants so that they can carry out duties without fear of assault."

Cllr Jeff Hook, executive member for the environment at Southwark Council, said "This sentence sends out a message that staff contracted by Southwark Council should be allowed to carry out their work without any fear of violence or attack. Parking enforcement officers are carrying out important work in the borough, and we welcome the judge's decision today."

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Notes for the Editor

APCOA Parking is Europe's longest-established and largest full-service parking services contractor, and is known within the parking industry for its many innovations over the years.

In the UK, APCOA employs around 2500 people, and its customer base includes local authorities, town and city councils, airport authorities, rail companies, shopping centres, department stores, port authorities, NHS trusts, in other words almost all types of organisation which need to supply parking or to enforce parking regulations.

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For further information about Southwark Council please contact Darell Carey at Southwark Council on 020 7525 0092 or email him on darell.carey@southwark.gov.uk. Councillor Hook is available for interview. Please contact Darell for details.

For further information about Wandsworth Council please contact press@wandsworth.gov.uk.

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