



PRESS RELEASE

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Magistrates' Association astonished at unpaid fines total

The Magistrates' Association reads with astonishment the Audit Commission's report that there is a staggering £1.3billion in unpaid confiscation orders, fines, compensation and legal costs. At a time of financial constraint with 103 courts threatened with closure to save money the failure to secure such a large amount of potential income will be considered by magistrates to border on negligence. The large sums uncollected send an unacceptable message to offenders, undermine the sentences of the courts and are a significant blow to public confidence.

Criminals will rejoice that they can retain the proceeds of their offending behaviour despite court orders. Magistrates were criticised recently for not imposing more fines to provide funding to service the justice system. They will now be rightly angry that the sentences they impose appear not to be adequately managed. Victims awarded compensation for the hurt and distress they have been caused continue to suffer. Magistrates are reporting a reduction in the number of courts with resultant delay in hearings and trials. The significant amount of unpaid costs would be more than sufficient to employ enough prosecutors to service all our current courts without further court closures.

The MA appreciates these figures are a legacy of a previous administration and is therefore willing to engage with the review it believes is necessary to restore the confidence of both the magistracy and the public.

END

For further information contact Ann Flintham 07812 038889

Notes for Editors

The £1.3 billion is made up as follows:
£706 million in unpaid confiscation orders
£350 million in unpaid fines
£150 million in unpaid compensation orders
£110 million in unpaid legal costs

PATRON: Her Majesty the Queen
PRESIDENT: The Lord Chief Justice

CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL: John Thornhill JP
DEPUTY CHAIRMEN: John Fassenfelt JP, John Howson JP
HONORARY TREASURER: Mike Dodden JP
CHIEF EXECUTIVE & ASSOCIATION SECRETARY: Sally Dickinson
Registered Charity Number 216066

END

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The Magistrates' Association was established in 1920 and is the voice of the magistracy. Over 80% of magistrates are members and the Association supports them in their essential work, represents their views and interests, provides information and advice and contributes to their training.