

FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL, 14 SWAN COURT,

FORDER WAY, CYGNET PARK, HAMPTON, PETERBOROUGH PE7 8GX

INQUIRY RE:

MR OLIVER HIRON DIPWCF

1. THE CHARGE

1.1 *“That, being registered under the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (as amended) (the Act):*

1. *On 27 July 2023, at Oxford Magistrates’ Court, you were convicted, following a guilty plea, of on 8 July 2023 at Banbury in the County of Oxfordshire, driving a motor vehicle after consuming so much alcohol that the proportion of it in your breath, namely 103 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath, exceeded the prescribed limit, contrary to section 5(1)(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988;*

And that in relation to the above, you received a community order of 80 hours of unpaid work, disqualification from holding or obtaining a driving licence for 24 months, a surcharge of £114, and costs of £85.

2. *You failed to submit any or all of the Annual Returns to the Council for the following years:*

- a) 2016;
- b) 2018;
- c) 2019;
- d) 2020;
- e) 2021;
- f) 2022;
- g) 2023;
- h) 2024;

And that, in relation to the facts alleged above, whether individually or in any combination, you are guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect.”

1.2 Ms Nicole Curtis, of Counsel, appeared on behalf of the Council. The Respondent appeared and was represented by Mr Matthew Corrie of Counsel.

ADMISSIONS

1.3 The Respondent admitted the factual charges in their entirety. The Committee, having heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor, therefore found them proved on the basis of his admission and having regard to the documentary evidence provided to the Committee. This included the memorandum of conviction, relevant documentation from Thames Valley Police and a witness statement with accompanying exhibits from the Professional Conduct Assistant at the Farriers Registration Council (the Council).

HEARING PARTS OF THE CASE IN PRIVATE

- 1.4 The Committee, having been provided with the Respondent's bundle in advance of the hearing, enquired of Mr Corrie whether he wished to apply for any references to personal and sensitive matters regarding the Respondent's private life, to be heard in private. Mr Corrie confirmed that he applied for such matters to be heard in private. Ms Curtis did not object to that course.
- 1.5 Having heard and accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor, the Committee was satisfied that it should hear any evidence relating to the Respondent's private life, in private. The Committee was satisfied that this was justified under Rule 11 in order to protect his private life.

BACKGROUND

- 1.6 On 27 July 2023, at the Oxford Magistrates' Court, following a guilty plea, the Respondent was convicted of driving a vehicle when the level of alcohol in his system was above the legal limit. The certificate of conviction shows that the Respondent was sentenced to a Community Order, consisting of 80 hours' unpaid work to be completed within a year, and was disqualified from driving for 24 months, to be reduced on successful completion of a course.
- 1.7 The Respondent declared the conviction on an Annual Return for 2025, which was received by the Council on 18 July 2025. He also provided comments on the conviction in a letter to the Council dated 20 August 2025.

Facts underlying the conviction

- 1.8 Documents obtained from the Police relating to the offence leading to the conviction, show that, during the evening of 8 July 2023, Police Officers were with their unmarked car in a petrol forecourt in Banbury when they heard a crash. They saw that a Toyota pick-up truck had driven onto a roundabout, by mounting the roundabout's curb, and had collided with road signs and become stuck. The driver of the vehicle was the Respondent. The Police Officers called for further police to attend and they assisted the Respondent out of the car. They saw that there were no other passengers in the vehicle, but there was a puppy on the backseat.
- 1.9 Officers undertook a roadside breath-test which indicated that the Respondent had alcohol in his system over the prescribed limit for driving. They arrested him and took him to the Accident and Emergency department of the Horton General Hospital in Banbury where he was examined at shortly after midnight. He was then taken by Officers to Banbury Police station, where he gave two specimens of breath, shortly after 01:00 on 9 July 2023. These showed that he had 103 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 ml of breath. The legal limit is 35 microgrammes.

Facts relating to non-submission of Annual Returns

- 1.10 Since January 2016, all Registered Farriers have been required to complete and submit an Annual Return to the Council. On the Annual Return, Farriers are asked to disclose any unspent police cautions or criminal convictions since their last disclosure to the Council. They are also asked to check that the contact information held by the Council is correct, indicating any required corrections, and to confirm that they hold Professional Indemnity Insurance ("PII").
- 1.11 This requirement is set out in the Code of Professional Conduct (the Code). Versions of the Code in 2017, 2021 and 2024 have all included provisions relating to this, whether by reference to annual declarations (2017) or Annual Returns (2021 and 2024).
- 1.12 The Annual Return and a covering letter are printed with the contact details held by the Council for each Registered Farrier and sent to them every year in the autumn, with a request that the Farrier complete and return the form. In some years, where no response has been received from the Farrier, the Council has sent a further copy of the Annual Return in the following

spring. Farriers are asked to either complete and return the printed paper form to the Council by post, or to complete their Annual Return online via a personal "MyFRC" account. All completed returns sent by post are logged on their receipt at the Council's office.

- 1.13 In September 2025, the Respondent submitted an Annual Return for 2025, in which he declared the conviction. It was noted by the Council that the Respondent had not submitted Annual Returns to the Council for 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. He did submit an Annual Return for 2017.

2. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE ON SERIOUS MISCONDUCT IN A PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

- 2.1 Ms Curtis, on behalf of the Council, submitted that the conduct amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect. She directed the Committee's attention to those parts of each of the respective Codes in force at the relevant time.
- 2.2 In respect of the conviction, Ms Curtis submitted that the farriery profession often involves its members driving to locations in order to shoe and tend to horses; and that it is important that members of the public can be confident that those professionals are safe and compliant with their legal obligations when they do so. The Council submits that the conduct had particular cause to bring the profession into disrepute given the integral nature of driving with regards to the profession.
- 2.3 In respect of the failure to submit Annual Returns, Ms Curtis submitted that as a result of the Respondent's failure to provide Annual Returns, the Council was unable to comply with its public interest duties to ensure that it held current, accurate information for all its registrants, and that its registrants were all adequately insured so as to provide financial protection for their clients. She submitted that these form part of the Council's duty to uphold public confidence in the profession and in the proper regulation of the profession. Ms Curtis stated that the Council's position with regard to public confidence in its regulatory processes was therefore potentially undermined as a result of the Respondent's conduct.
- 2.4 Mr Corrie, on behalf of the Respondent, informed the Committee that the Respondent recognised that his conduct was likely to be considered by the Committee as amounting to serious misconduct in a professional respect and did not seek to make submissions to the contrary.
- 2.5 The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor who referred to the principles to be applied when considering misconduct in a professional respect.
- 2.6 The Committee considered that the admitted facts were very different to each other and so initially considered the conviction and the failure to submit Annual Returns separately.
- 2.7 At this stage, in response to Ms Curtis' request to do so, the Committee considered the aggravating factors and concluded that the following were present in this case, relevant to the conduct itself:

Conviction for driving with excess alcohol

- a. There was a risk of injury to both animal and human. In this case, the Committee noted that there had been a puppy in the vehicle at the time, and, although no actual injury had been caused to either animal or human, there was an inherent risk of serious injury by virtue of driving when three times over the legal limit;

- b. The Committee considered that the Respondent had been reckless in his decision to drive while suspecting he was likely to be over the legal limit, without stopping to think of the potential risk of injury or worse to the public;

Failing to submit Annual Returns

- c. The Committee considered that the Respondent's failures had been sustained in the light of annual requests and reminders from the Council to submit the returns and had been repeated over a period of around eight years; and
 - d. The Committee considered that the Respondent's failures amounted a blatant and wilful disregard of the role of the Council and the systems that regulate the farriery profession.
- 2.8 Although the Committee recognised that there may be personal mitigation in this case, it did not consider that personal mitigation was relevant in its assessment of whether the conduct itself amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect. Aside from the fact that there was no actual harm to animal or human, the Committee did not identify any other mitigating factors at this stage relevant to the assessment of whether the conduct itself amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect.
- 2.9 In relation to the conviction for driving with excess alcohol, the Committee was of the view that although there was no actual harm caused, it was particularly serious as there was a high risk of very serious harm to others by taking the decision to drive when three times over the legal limit. The Committee was of the view that such conduct would be regarded as morally disgraceful, dishonourable and would attract opprobrium from members of the public. It would also be considered as deplorable by members of the profession.
- 2.10 In relation to the failure to submit Annual Returns, the Committee considered that this was serious as it had the potential to undermine the integrity of the Farriers' Register. The Committee considered that the public would expect to be able to rely on farriers meeting their professional obligations by making regular declarations in respect of their details, character and holding of PII. The Committee was of the view that sustained and repeated failures to submit returns, blatantly disregarding professional obligations would be regarded as deplorable by the public and members of the public.
- 2.11 In the Committee's judgement, the Respondent's conduct in respect of both matters was a serious departure from the standards expected such that it amounted both individually and in combination, to serious misconduct in a professional respect.

3. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE AS TO SANCTION

- 3.1 Ms Curtis confirmed that the Respondent was first registered as a Farrier on 1 March 2010. She also confirmed that he had no previous findings against him from the Disciplinary Committee and therefore was of good character.
- 3.2 The Respondent gave oral evidence to the Committee, as well as calling a character witness on his behalf. In addition, he provided a bundle of documents which included:
- a. His signed witness statement, dated 10 March 2026 together with accompanying exhibits; and
 - b. Recent testimonials from clients for whom he provided farriery services, all of whom had been made aware of his conduct and the ongoing proceedings at the Council.

- 3.3 The Legal Assessor advised the Committee of the Indicative Sanctions Guidance (the Guidance) and of the need for proportionality when considering sanction. The purpose of sanction was not to punish for past conduct, but to arrive at a proportionate outcome to the case, having regard to the Committee's responsibility to protect equine welfare, to uphold public confidence in the profession and to maintain proper standards of conduct for Registered Farriers.
- 3.4 The Committee had regard to the aggravating features in relation to the Respondent's conduct itself, that it had identified at the stage of finding serious misconduct in a professional respect. It did not identify any additional aggravating factors.
- 3.5 The Committee next considered the relevant mitigating factors, and was of the view that the following were evident:
- a. The Respondent had a previously unblemished career of some 16 years as a farrier, and the wealth of testimonials he had provided attested to his usual skill and professionalism in that role;
 - b. The Respondent had been open and frank about his conduct at an early stage. He admitted driving whilst under the influence to the police at the scene and he had pleaded guilty to driving with excess alcohol at the Magistrates' Court. At the outset of this hearing before the Disciplinary Committee, he had admitted the facts and that they amounted to serious misconduct in a professional respect;
 - c. The Respondent had subsequently taken practical steps to reduce the risk of repetition in respect of both driving with excess alcohol and submitting Annual Returns;
 - d. Whilst the Committee did not consider that there was a significant lapse of time since either aspect of the misconduct, it did note that the Respondent's licence had since been returned and he had been driving without apparent incident for approaching one year. He had also submitted the latest two Annual Returns without having to be reminded to do so;
 - e. The Committee considered that the Respondent had demonstrated a good level of insight in respect of both aspects of the misconduct. In respect of the conviction, it was clear to the Committee that he took full responsibility for his actions and understood the potential impact on the public and the reputation of the profession. In respect of the Annual Returns, the Committee considered that whilst the Respondent may not have fully appreciated the importance of submitting his returns at the time, he now demonstrated a good understanding of their importance to the effective regulation of the profession. It also noted that he had adapted the way he responded to the requests and met his professional obligations;
 - f. The Respondent has demonstrated a commitment to the farriery profession and equine welfare by maintaining his business throughout the period of his ban, including when at financial cost to himself.
- 3.6 In respect of the misconduct underpinning the conviction, given all the mitigation, the Committee considered that the risk of repetition was unlikely. In respect of the failure to submit Annual Returns, the Committee considered that the risk was relatively low, given the steps the Respondent had put in place and his good insight into the importance of submitting them. The Committee considered that nevertheless there was still an identifiable risk based on the Respondent's previous failure to submit Annual Returns despite repeated prompts to do so over a number of years.
- 3.7 The Committee considered each sanction in ascending order of seriousness.

- 3.8 Given the adverse impact of the serious misconduct on the reputation of the profession, the Committee considered that the case was too serious for the Committee to take no further action. The Committee was of the view that taking no action would be insufficient to mark the seriousness of the case.
- 3.9 The Committee did not consider any purpose would be served by postponing sanction. The Respondent had provided a significant number of references to demonstrate that there were no issues with his professional skills.
- 3.10 The Committee next considered whether the case, and in particular the public interest considerations of maintaining confidence in the profession and upholding expected professional standards, could be addressed by way of a reprimand and/or warning. The Committee had regard to the specific Guidance in respect of when a reprimand and/or warning may be appropriate as follows:
- A reprimand and/or or warning may be appropriate, where:*
- *the misconduct is at the lower end of the spectrum of seriousness and;*
 - *there is no future risk to animals or the public, and;*
 - *there is evidence of insight.*
- 3.11 Given that the Committee had concluded that the risk of repetition in respect of driving with excess alcohol was unlikely, and the failure to submit Annual Returns did not directly impact on animal welfare or public safety, it considered that there was no future risk to animals or the public. Furthermore, the Committee was satisfied that the Respondent had demonstrated good insight in his written and oral evidence.
- 3.12 However, the Committee did not consider that either the conviction for driving with excess alcohol or the repeated failure to submit Annual Returns could properly be categorised as misconduct which was at the lower end of the spectrum of seriousness. In relation to the conviction, the Respondent had been some three times over the limit and his recklessness in choosing to drive could have caused really serious injury or worse. In relation to the failure to submit Annual Returns, the Committee bore in mind that it had found such conduct to be sustained, repeated and in blatant disregard of the regulatory systems of the Council. The Committee also had regard to its view that whilst the risk of repetition in failing to submit an Annual Return was relatively low, there was nevertheless an identifiable risk.
- 3.13 The Committee therefore carefully considered whether this ruled out a reprimand and/or a warning as an appropriate and proportionate sanction, or whether such a sanction would be able to address the significant public interest issues and the relatively low but still identifiable ongoing risk in this case.
- 3.14 In the Committee's judgement, the extensive insight, remorse, remediation and commitment to the profession demonstrated by the Respondent were such that his misconduct could appropriately be met through a reprimand and a warning. The Committee also had regard to the wealth of positive testimonials attesting to the Respondent's usual high standards of professionalism and noted that there was a public interest in retaining an otherwise highly regarded farrier in the profession.
- 3.15 The Committee was of the view that a reprimand would serve to mark both aspects of the misconduct and send the message that such conduct was wholly unacceptable for a farrier. In addition, the Committee considered that a warning as to future conduct would be appropriate and sufficient to address the relatively low but identifiable risk of repetition of failing to submit future Annual Returns.
- 3.16 In order to satisfy itself that a reprimand was proportionate and sufficient to address the public interest aspect in this case, the Committee went on to consider suspension. In the particular circumstances of this case, the Committee was of the view that a suspension would be

disproportionate and unduly punitive. The Committee was satisfied that public confidence in the profession and the declaring of proper standards would be addressed by way of a reprimand and a warning. It was also satisfied that the relatively low, but nevertheless identifiable risk of repetition in respect of the Annual Returns would be addressed by way of a warning as to future conduct.

- 3.17 Accordingly, the Committee determined to impose a reprimand and a warning in the following terms:

You must have regard to your Code of Professional Conduct and must have regard to all of your future professional obligations.

Disciplinary Committee

19 March 2026