

FARRIERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL
DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE
HELD BY VIDEO LINK ON 20TH MARCH 2026

INQUIRY RE:

MR MALCOLM SLOSS

1. THE CHARGE:

- 1.1 *“That, being registered under the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975 (as amended) (“the Act”) and in respect that on 1 November 2024 you were convicted at Glasgow High Court of 10 separate sexual offences, all as set out in Schedule A to this notice, for which you were sentenced to 13 years’ imprisonment and requirement to register under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act for an indefinite period was imposed.*

And in relation to the facts alleged you are guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect.”

- 1.2 The offences set out in Schedule A to the notice of inquiry comprise six charges of rape, one charge of indecent assault, one charge of sexual assault, one charge of communicating indecently with a young child, and one charge of lewd and libidinous practices and behaviour.

Introduction

- 1.3 This is the decision of the Disciplinary Committee (“the Committee”) of the Farriers Registration Council (“the Council”) in the case of Malcolm Sloss (“the defender”), following a hearing by video link on 20 March 2026. At that hearing, the Council was represented by Ms Catriona Watt (“the Solicitor”). The defender did not attend, nor was he represented.

Service

- 1.4 The Solicitor produced copies of three letters, all of which were sent to the defender at HMP Barlinnie. The first, dated 6 November 2025, advised the defender of the date fixed for the hearing of the Committee, asked the defender to confirm whether he intended to attend or be represented, and offered assistance with arranging a video link. The second, dated 15 January 2026, enclosed a copy of the notice of inquiry and reiterated the date fixed for the hearing and the request that the defender confirm whether he intended to attend or be represented. The third, dated 16 February 2026, again repeated the date fixed for the hearing, asked the defender to let the Solicitor know if he would need a video link set up, warned him that the hearing may proceed in his absence, and advised that he may wish to seek legal advice. All three letters were accompanied by recorded delivery slips and tracked delivery slips with signatures confirming delivery to HMP Barlinnie.
- 1.5 The Legal Adviser advised the Committee that Rule 2 of the Farriers Registration Council Disciplinary Committee (Procedure) Rules 1976 (“the Disciplinary Rules”) provides that the Solicitor shall serve a notice of inquiry upon the defender, and that the Committee “shall not hold an inquiry unless a notice of inquiry has been served ... in accordance with these Rules”.

- 1.6 Rule 15 provides that “where a document is required by these rules to be served upon ... any person, it shall be sent by post to his last known address”.
- 1.7 The Committee were satisfied that the notice of inquiry had been served in accordance with the Disciplinary Rules.

Proceeding in absence

- 1.8 The Solicitor advised the Committee that the defender had not responded to her letters of 6 November 2025, 15 January 2026 and 16 February 2026, or to earlier letters (dated 6 and 10 October 2025) advising him that his case had been referred to the Committee. She submitted that there was no known good cause for his non-attendance. By reference to the case law¹, she submitted that the defender had deliberately and voluntarily absented himself and had therefore waived his right to be present and represented at the hearing; that the Committee had the discretion to allow the hearing to proceed in his absence, and that the public interest in public protection and confidence in the profession and regulator required the hearing to proceed. She submitted that fairness was of primary importance that that the Committee could have regard to the defender’s deliberate and voluntary failure to attend; the absence of any suggestion from him that he wished to be represented; the absence of any disadvantage to him in not being able to give his account of events, given the fact of his conviction; the absence of any real risk of the Committee reaching an improper conclusion in the defender’s absence, given the fact of the conviction; the nature and seriousness of the offences and the period of time over which they had been committed; the public interest in upholding professional standards, and in maintaining confidence in the profession and regulator; and the need for a decision on the defender’s registration to be taken without further delay.
- 1.9 The Legal Assessor advised the Committee² that whilst it had the discretion to proceed in the defender’s absence, the interests of justice required that it exercise the utmost care and caution, and that fairness was the paramount consideration. The following factors would be relevant to the Committee’s decision whether or not to proceed in the defender’s absence: the reason for his non-attendance (was there known good cause, or had he deliberately and voluntarily absented himself); whether he had requested an adjournment; whether it was likely that he would engage and appear or be represented at a later date if an adjournment was granted; the seriousness of the charge and the possible consequences for the defender if the hearing were to proceed in his absence; whether the defender would suffer a disadvantage in not being able to give his account of events to the Committee; whether there was a risk of the Committee reaching the wrong conclusions if they were to proceed in his absence; whether public protection concerns would arise if the hearing was adjourned; and whether there was a public interest in the expeditious determination of the case.
- 1.10 The Committee determined that the hearing should proceed in the defender’s absence. They considered that there was no known good cause for his failure to attend or be represented and that he had deliberately and voluntarily absented himself from the hearing. Given the seriousness of the charge, there was a public interest in the expeditious determination of the case and in protecting the reputation of the profession and the regulator. Given the fact of the conviction, the defender would not be significantly prejudiced by the case proceeding in his absence; his position (that he was an innocent man) was known to the Committee. The Committee concluded that the balance of fairness tipped in favour of the hearing proceeding in the defender’s absence.

¹ *R v Hayward, Jones and Purvis* [2001] QB 862 CA; *R v Jones* [2002] UKHL 5; *Adeogba v GMC* [2016] EWCA Civ 162.

² By reference to the cases listed above and referred to in the Solicitor’s submission, and to page 10 (para 11) of the Disciplinary Committee Manual

2. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE ON THE FACTS

- 2.1 After reading the charge³, the Solicitor submitted that the charge against the defender was proved. She referred the Committee to the extract conviction and noted the nature of the offences – which she described as being of “the utmost gravity” - and that they were committed over a period of around 30 years. She drew the Committee’s attention to the remarks of the sentencing judge, who condemned the defender’s behaviour “in the strongest possible terms” and imposed “a significant prison sentence to punish [him] for his behaviour and to mark to [him] and to others the consequences which will follow this type of serious sexual abuse”. She advised the Committee that the defender continued to maintain his innocence and drew attention to letters received from him (in response to the Council advising him that his case was to be referred to the Investigating Committee) to this effect. She submitted that the Committee should find the charge against the defender proved.
- 2.2 The legal adviser reminded the Committee that the onus was on the Council to prove the case against the defender, and that the standard of proof was on balance of probabilities. She advised that the extract conviction was sufficient proof of the fact of the conviction. She advised that, although the defender continued to protest his innocence, it was only in exceptional circumstances that the Committee should “look behind” a conviction⁴.
- 2.3 The Committee was satisfied that the extract conviction was sufficient to prove the charge on balance of probabilities. The defender’s protestations of innocence did not constitute “exceptional circumstances” that would permit the Committee to “look behind” the conviction. The Committee found the charge against the defender proved.

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

- 3.1 The Solicitor drew attention to the nature of the defender’s conviction and submitted that “disgraceful conduct outside professional practice” could be sufficient to bring the profession into disrepute and call for action by the regulator⁵; but that in any event it was clear from the remarks of the sentencing judge that the defender came into contact with one of his victims through his work as a farrier – as such, it could not be said that his offending behaviour was entirely unconnected with his work. She submitted that there could be no circumstances in which a farrier on the Council’s Register, convicted of such a number of serious sexual assaults over such a long period of time, could be anything other than guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect.
- 3.2 The Legal Adviser reminded the Committee that whether or not serious misconduct in a professional respect was established was a matter of judgement – no burden or standard of proof applied. The Disciplinary Committee Manual provides that the Committee may consider aggravating and mitigating factors that relate to the conduct itself; and may take account of breaches of the Farrier, Approved Training Farrier & Apprentice Code of Professional Conduct (“the Code”)⁶. The Code sets out the “guiding principles” that farriers are expected to uphold. These include upholding the good reputation of the farriery profession and avoiding situations, both within and outwith the professional context, that could be in breach of the law.⁷ The Code

³ As required by Rule 5 of the Disciplinary Rules

⁴ *Stannard v General Council of the Bar* [2006] LTL 30.1.2006; *Shepherd v Law Society* [1996] EWCA Civ 977; *Smith v Linskill* [1996] 2 All ER 253

⁵ *Remedy (UK) Ltd v GMC* [2010] EWHC 1245 (Admin)

⁶ Disciplinary Committee Manual, chapter 8

⁷ As set out on page 3 of the Code

also sets out professional responsibilities. These include: “farriers must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute”; and “farriers must not exhibit behaviour that is at variance with the core values of a registered farrier, including any form of abuse, bullying, coercion, discrimination, exploitation, harassment, intimidation or offensive language”⁸. With regard to criminal convictions, the Code says this:

*Serious criminal offences will usually amount to a matter of serious misconduct ... Not every criminal offence will necessarily be notified to the FRC or referred to the DC, but as a guide, offences which are likely to affect the farrier’s ability to practise, call their honest and integrity into question, endanger the public or bring the profession into disrepute – these examples are not exhaustive – may amount to serious misconduct.*⁹

- 3.3 The Committee considered the defender’s conviction was in respect of offences of the utmost gravity and that there had been a clear breach of the standards and responsibilities set out in the Code.
- 3.4 The Committee considered that the fact that the defender had encountered one of his victims through his work as a farrier was an aggravating factor. The Committee did not identify any mitigating factors.
- 3.5 The Committee concluded that the defender was guilty of serious misconduct in a professional respect.

4. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE AS TO SANCTION

- 4.1 The Solicitor submitted that a number of aggravating features were present and should be taken into account by the Committee: the nature and extent of the defender’s offending behaviour; the fact that at least one victim was a young woman he had come in contact with through his work as a farrier; his continued denial of guilt; and the risk he poses to women and girls – both clients, and members of the public at large. The only mitigating factor was his lack of any previous regulatory history. The Solicitor submitted that the Committee should impose a sanction at the highest end of the scale.
- 4.2 The Legal Assessor reminded the Committee¹⁰ that the purpose of imposing a sanction is not punitive but rather is to protect the public and the public interest, and the reputation of the profession and the regulator. The Committee should have regard to both aggravating and mitigating factors. The sanction imposed required to be proportionate. The Committee should consider the sanctions available to it in ascending order of severity, considering the least restrictive sanction first. Sanction was ultimately a matter for the Committee’s judgement: no burden or standard of proof applied.
- 4.3 The Committee had regard to the non-exhaustive lists of aggravating and mitigating factors published within the Indicative Sanctions Guidance.¹¹ It concluded that a number of aggravating factors were present: actual injury to humans; risk of injury to humans; premeditated misconduct; breach of client trust; the involvement of a vulnerable client; sexual misconduct; breach of a position of trust; misconduct sustained or repeated over a period of time; blatant or wilful disregard of the values and standards of the farriery profession; lack of

⁸ As set out on pages 12 and 13 (para 16) of the Code

⁹ As set out on page 33 (para 95) of the Code

¹⁰ By reference to page 10 (para 12) of the Disciplinary Committee Manual and to the Indicative Sanctions Guidance contained within the Disciplinary Committee Manual (from page 19 onwards)

¹¹ At pages 19 and 20 (para 16) of the Disciplinary Committee Manual

insight into the offence; and the number of victims, the harmful impact of the offences on them, and the period of time over which the offences were committed. The Committee did not identify any mitigating factors, beyond the absence of any previous regulatory history.

- 4.5 The Committee considered, in turn, and in ascending order, the various outcomes and sanctions available to it. It considered that the seriousness of the defender's conviction was such that no sanction other than removal from the Register was sufficient to protect the public, protect the reputation of the profession and regulator and the wider public interest. The Committee considered that the defender's offending behaviour (as proved by the extract conviction) was fundamentally incompatible with him being a Registered Farrier.¹²
- 4.6 Accordingly, and in accordance with section 15 of the Act and Rule 7 of the Procedure Rules, the Committee directs that the defender's name shall be removed from the Register.

Decision of:

The Disciplinary Committee of the Farriers Registration Council

20 March 2026

¹² Page 24 (para 21) of the Indicative Sanctions Guidance (contained within the Disciplinary Committee Manual) provides that removal from the Register may be appropriate where behaviour is fundamentally incompatible with being a Registered Farrier and may involve offences of a sexual nature.