

This issue's letters cover two months, during which we have received far too many to publish. Those included are representative of the various subjects that you have written about. Most deal with the questionable sales practices that seem to have come to the fore in the UK rental industry this summer. We would like to remind readers that the letters are not necessarily the views of this publication or its staff.

Dear Sir,

Re the letter from Phil Allan in your recent publication.

Having read this letter a number of times, and allowing my blood to cool down, I am left with the impression that the writer of this letter is under the impression that he does not have to take any responsibility for his actions as a director of a number of failed companies.

Reading his letter it has become abundantly clear that he is unable to comprehend his statutory duties to ensure that his companies remain solvent whilst trading.

I do not understand why he is trying to blame HMRC for trying to recover the unpaid taxes due to them. If the company was run correctly then the payment issues to HMRC would not have arisen.

I feel that the part about the government loan guarantee scheme is a red herring as clearly he did not require this funding for the reasons given in his letter. He then goes on to blame the Bank and again HMRC for the failure of this loan.

Had his company actually been solvent whilst trading then the debts due could and should have been paid when due and any winding up petition could easily have been dismissed in court.

He states that his company had only recently started up when he was "forced" to purchase the business assets from the administrators.

This statement of his defies belief. Did someone hold a gun to his head? Is this the actions of a sane and competent director?

There follows yet more accusations against various factoring and administrative companies. Has he forgotten that as a director he actually engaged the factoring company concerned. And again if the company had been run correctly any attempt to put it into administration would have been dismissed in court.

His attacks, if correct, show that he has failed in his duties, as a director, to carry out proper due diligence in his selection of the factoring company. This is his mistake and no one else's. If the company was solvent why was he unable to stop the appointment of the administrator?

Perhaps, given the number of his failed companies, he should be reported and struck off as a company director until such time as he is able to accept responsibility for his own actions and omissions.

Yours sincerely

P J Chapman.

CA Chapman Crane & Plant Hire

Surrey

Dear Sirs,

I would like to respond to the points you raise in an online article regarding the Ainscough Crane Hire equipment which we used in the recent complex rescue of the fallen tower crane in central Liverpool <http://www.vertikal.net/en/stories.php?id=8335>

Whilst I respect the right of the media to write about the news as they see fit, equally I feel it is important to ensure that reporting is an accurate representation of fact, and it is for this reason I would like to provide you with the following information:

Within your detailed coverage of the rescue you include reference to the basket used: "One surprise was the access equipment used for the inspections, a fairly rustic looking platform suspended from one of the cranes. It does not appear to meet many of the international standards set out for this type of equipment and given that the height of the fallen crane is in the 25 to 30 metre range, one would have thought that a truck mounted aerial lift might have been used.

"However it is easy to be an armchair critic, it is of course entirely possible that space limitations meant that the suspended platform was the most practical solution.

"That does not change the fact that the platform does not look up to the job with no midrail and no overhead protection. A shame given that the rest of the approach seems so professional."

In response to your comments we wish to confirm:

- Our plan which included access and egress to the tower crane using a man basket was approved by the HSE, all safety issues were addressed, and indeed the HSE representative and the client's Health and Safety Director were in the man basket reported upon.
- Use of a MEWP was considered during the planning of the operation, however this would have put our personnel and HTC in an un-safe condition, hence our decision to opt for the mobile tower crane.
- The EN standard has been revoked

At Ainscough Crane Hire Ltd we are committed to the highest standards of health and safety, so I am sure you will understand our grave concern at any suggestion that our equipment does not meet appropriate standards. I do hope you will accept this note in the spirit it is intended - a well natured attempt to provide information to correct any suggestion that our equipment does not comply with appropriate standards.

Yours sincerely

**Neil Partridge Managing Director
Ainscough Crane Hire Ltd**

Just a closing comment on the tower crane rescue in Liverpool - Ainscough completed the recovery perfectly in textbook fashion - although we still don't like the man basket - ed



The following letter concerns a report that one or more salesmen from a major access rental company were following competitors equipment to site in the north of England.

Hi Leigh,

I have just got back from holiday and have been informed of what has been happening in the north of England where truck mounted access providers are having their machines followed. Interestingly one of our drivers 10 or 12 days ago mentioned to me that there had been a car parked across the road from our depot. He informed me that it was a black Ford and that there was a man sat in it. It was reported because it was 6 am on a Sunday morning. We have no further information and I'm not even sure if our vehicle was followed because we thought it was someone looking to break in to the premises.

The CCTV footage shows the vehicle but you couldn't make out the car or passenger very well as it was obscured. When our vehicle left the yard the suspicious vehicle did turn around and go the same way as our vehicle. It all seems too much of a coincidence and looking back now I think it was the same guy who probably then followed our vehicle to the site it was working at. I asked the driver yesterday if he noticed if he was followed but he didn't pay any attention to that as this hasn't happened before.

I seriously think that the company should know better than this and that they are ostracising themselves even more. These are very poor tactics from such a company. They should think about what they are doing in the market place and lead the way instead of using underhand and archaic tactics.

Have you had any other responses regarding the article you published or is it just us and the one in the report that are targets?

Kind regards,

Tom Wilson

Director

Wilson Access Hire

The following letter is one of several received following a report on a new campaign by UK rental company Hewden 'Return to Sender' offering to match rental rates for equipment on hire with free delivery, if the competitors equipment is returned and the replacement equipment is kept for at least three weeks.

Hewden also wrote to us taking issue with some comments in the report. It states that it is not encouraging customers to break existing rental agreements and that it is 'a fact of life that every hire achieved is at the expense of another supplier'. It also takes issue with a comment that we published in which a rental company, having come up against the campaign called it 'underhand and unprofessional'.

The most important point of Hewden's letter though is that it stresses that it is categorically not allowing its service and responsiveness to suffer as a result of the lower rates that are likely to be generated by this campaign. It says that to the contrary it is "strictly adhering to its traditional high values, standards and professionalism" and has offered to show how it is working to improve standards rather than allowing them to slip.

Dear Sir,

I read with interest the article published yesterday with regards to Hewden's latest sales tactics. My company and I were a victim of this quite ridiculous and completely unprofessional method of sales just recently. It was on Monday in fact, the apparent launch date of their deal.

We had 2 pieces of rental equipment out on hire to a large customer of ours for £1,000 per week. This was already a significant reduction in the hire rate that we would put out to other, smaller customers (usually at £1,500 per week).

The rate that was quoted to our customer? Free delivery and transport and £650 per week. When I was approached by my customer with this quite insulting price I was very willing to turn them away knowing this price was ridiculous. However, as business stands currently I don't want to be losing any sort of business, even at such a rate and especially not to a company who evidently has no moral code. I don't know what kind of sales practices they are wishing to show considering I could easily make sales with such a spineless technique as this but I prefer to think my customers approach me for my knowledge and service as opposed to my completely mindless rate slashing. I would like to thank you for bringing evidence of this sales pitch to the fore.

Regards.

Letter submitted online with name and address withheld

Dear Sir,

Regarding your editorial comment on sales reps following competitors vehicles in order to determine the hirer, I find the sham horror expressed at this action, which I agree is not the best use of his time and effort, pretty hypocritical.

Each year, your magazine along with all of the others in this and every other industry, carries items about this person moving to that company in some form of sales capacity. As a salesman for many years in this industry I am fully aware of the tactics used, particularly by smaller companies, of offering large salary enhancements to poach salesmen. These sale people are not just being approached for their sales technique. They are approached for their contact books, their knowledge of the competitions' approach and inside workings and their ability to provide a quick sales boost to their new employers. I have personal experience of a fairly new comer to this industry taking one of our sales team in the last month. This salesman is now approaching each one of his old customers and slashing the rates that these customers were previously quite happily paying. Where is the outcry over these, accepted but far more damaging techniques?

So, please can everybody get real here. We all know it happens. We all accept it happens with salesmen. This unfortunate guy's real mistake was in getting caught and being too obvious.

Yours

Gary Brady

Dear Leigh,

I have just this second managed to scrape my jaw from the floor after reading your article on 'Predatory tactics'!

I had meant to comment a lot sooner on the article you carried some months ago with reference to the Australians and their zero tolerance to such practices. The reason I got actively involved in IPAF was to push our trade association to grow a pair of balls and actually police our industry.

I agree whole hardily with Andrew Reid our previous president when he said.

Quoting directly from Vertikal.net "Reid stressed the fact that the primary reason of IPAF is to support member's interests, but he also said that during his two year tenure he wants to see IPAF members adhere strictly to safety standards. "There

has been some evidence that some members have cut corners, it is scandalous to hand over a piece of shoddy unsafe equipment" "IPAF is going to get tough on non compliance" he warned."

My belief is that the member's interests go well beyond the enforcement of basic standards that any business with a decent set of morals would up keep, it goes miles beyond that. There are lots of businesses that do all the compliance

issues to the book, but it's at boardroom, sales and office level that their morals and tactics are questionable! That is what our trade association has to stamp on and be seen to root out from this industry.

More and more I find myself embarrassed to be an access man, not because of my own actions but that of my contemporaries and this is one of those times. As a recognised industry we are now in reality worse than car salesmen and estate agents, as respective industries they eventually recognised the error of their ways and changed!

A recession is a cruel beast to a poorly managed business.

Regards

Name and address provided but editor's decision not to publish in order that this subject does not degenerate any further into something more personal.

Sir,

Like many others I was impressed by the innovative use of the 'empty' plinth at Trafalgar Square. However the use of a wholly inappropriate machine to provide access is inexplicable.

Those of us who live in the world of vertical access know only too well the vast and ever increasing raft of regulations and codes of practices that have to be adhered to on a day-to-day basis under continuous threat of prosecution. This Health & Safety environment however is one to be both cherished for its objectives and respected for its potential effect on businesses and livelihoods.

It is a mystery therefore that members of the public let alone workers are permitted to be transported from one level to another completely contradictory to all approved use of aerial platforms whether or not installed on a telehandler. That a projected 2400 are to be carried in such a way - nearly 5000 cycles beggars belief. The other breaches of PPE requirements as well as conventional H&S provisions just compound the wholly amateur approach which has patently been approved in some way.

This can only be explained by the fact that a conventional passenger hoist or transport platform or mobile stairway would affect the overall artistic impact of the event and that just would not do.

In despair

Chris Hardy

Scanclimber (UK)

Sir,

With reference to your piece on Sennebogen in the July issue of Cranes & Access, it is time for this nonsense long perpetrated by Sennebogen that they pioneered the hydraulic lattice boom crane to cease. Firstly, as early as 1964, Peter Hamilton Equipment Ltd of Matlock, Derbyshire introduced a lattice boom crane attachment for its Hymac 580 crawler fully-hydraulic excavator built at the Rhmney Engineering Co. Ltd factory in Monmouthshire. This I believe was the first fully hydraulic lattice boom crane.

In 1965, Poclairn introduced a similar 2.5-tonne capacity lattice boom crane attachment for its TY 45 wheel-mounted hydraulic excavator. In 1966, Richier introduced a lattice boom crane attachment for its Oleomat H11P wheel-mounted hydraulic excavator and in 1967 Peter Hamilton Equipment Ltd introduced a 40-60ft lattice boom crane attachment for its Hymac 1080 crawler excavator rated at 15-tons (long) @ 9ft radius. I can check but it's likely that other German hydraulic excavator makers had also followed similar paths in the mid-to-late 1960s.

Should the retort be - Ah!!! but what about a purpose-designed crane? - not that the Sennebogen was that - it was also a dragline, etc. Then also in 1967, Peter Hamilton Equipment Ltd., of Matlock, Derbyshire - (since 1962 responsible for the sales and marketing of the famous Hymac hydraulic excavators - entered the mobile crane business with the introduction of the Hy-Lift Jupiter 'all-hydraulic' lattice boom crawler crane with a maximum rating of 35-tons @ 10ft radius on a 30ft two-piece main boom extendible to 120ft and available with a 100ft main plus 30ft jib combination. The tracks were driven by reversible hydraulic motors through epicyclic gear reduction. Two hydraulic pumps supplied power for the tracks, 3 hoists (boom, main and aux) and slew. The Jupiter featured in the Nov 1967 edition of 'Cranes' magazine complete with photo and alongside the also newly-introduced Hy-Lift Mercury 15-ton tele boom truck crane. Like the Hymac hydraulic excavators, the Hy-Lift cranes were built in Rhymney, South Wales.

So, much as I respect much of Sennebogen's illustrious history, etc., let's put an end to this fable! Publish this under my name if you chose.

Stuart Anderson

Chortsey Bar Associates

Letters to the editor:

Please send letters to the editor: Cranes&Access: PO Box 6998, Brackley NN13 5WY, UK. We reserve the right to edit letters for length.

We also point out that letters are the personal views of our readers and not necessarily the views of the Vertikal Press Ltd or its staff.