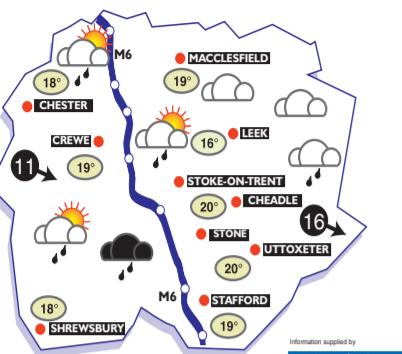


Info Desk

Weather



Tonight it will be dry with clear periods, but becoming cloudier from the west during the course of the night. A risk of light rain in western areas towards morning. There will be a light to moderate west-westerly wind. Mild with temperatures above average. Low 13-16C (55-61F). Tomorrow Mainly cloudy during the morning, with patchy rain. This rain may become heavier later, before clearing away south-eastwards, leaving sunny spells. Moderate westerly winds. High 17-20C (63-68F).

Air Pollution: Rural: 3 (Low) Town & Cities: 3 (Low) Roadside: 3 (Low)

Low (1-3) Moderate (4-6) High (7-8) Very High (10)

Hours of Darkness: 8.21pm to 5.55am. Data supplied by the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Chemists

AUDLEY: Co-op, Church Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

BIDFULPH: Co-op, Well Street, 8.30-7.30pm.

CHEADLE: Ratcliffe, High Street, 6-6.30pm.

CHESTER: Boots, Bridge Street, 6-7pm.

CREWE: Morrisons, Nantwich Road, 9-8pm.

ECCLESALL: Eccleshall Pharmacy, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

ENDON: McMullen, Station Road, 5.30-6.30pm.

GOLDENHILL: Goldenhill Pharmacy, Anne Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

GREAT HAYWOOD: Haywood, Trent Close, 5.30-6.30pm.

HARTSHILL: Hartshill Pharmacy, Hartshill Road, 5.30-6pm.

NANTWICH: Williams, High Street, 9am-5.30pm.

SHREWSBURY: Co-op, Shrewsbury Road, 9am-10pm.

TEAN: Lawton, High Street, 5.30-6.30pm.

UTTOXETER: Uttoxeter Health Stores, Balance Street Health Centre, 5.30-6.30pm.

Helpline

North Staffs Dyslexia Association. Information, guidance, support and training for everyone with an interest and involvement in children and adults with dyslexia. Helpline number: 01782 627166.

Chemical Dependence Anonymous. Do you have a problem with drink/drugs addiction? Want help? Meeting is held every Thursday, 7.30pm until 9pm at the Arch Daycare Centre, Regent Road, Hanley (round the back up the stairs). More details from 07837908125. We are a self supporting group through our own voluntary contributions.

Echo Group: Social support group for people who self-harm. Every Monday from 1pm to 4pm and Wednesday 10am to 1pm. Telephone: 07876 161356.

Women's Rape and Sexual Violence Service. Confidential counselling for any woman or girl who has been raped or sexually assaulted, whether recently or in the past. Tel: 01782 221000 or info@wrvs.org.uk.

Assist 2000 Family Support Group: A local self help group offering support, understanding and information to the families of drug and alcohol users. Tel: Anne 01782 502524 (evenings, evenings and weekends) or Anne/Maggie on 01782 425100 (office hours).

Druplink Family and Friends Helpline: Weekdays Monday to Friday 5.30pm to 9.30pm; Saturdays 2pm to 6pm. Tel: 01782 280776. Confidential helpline.

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Petition to shut down IT firm may destroy chances Is this D-day for staff's

BY DAVID ELKS

david.elks@thesentinel.co.uk

CREDITORS across the Potteries were today seeking to shut down part of Paul Hackney's business empire as they try to claw back thousands of pounds he owes them.

Festival Park architect Hulme Upright Manning and furniture maker Little Dreams have jointly lodged a petition to wind up Abuse IT which traded in Hanley until its sudden closure in May.

A successful order would see liquidators appointed to sell-off the company's remaining assets.

This would also allow other creditors to recoup some of their losses incurred after Mr Hackney – dubbed by some former associates as "Captain Cad" because of his claims of being a former commissioned Army officer – shut the business. But the move could scupper a mass compensation claim by around 38 employees who want two months' unpaid wages and benefits totalling at least £100,000. Mr Hackney has previously pledged to pay this money.

Hanley law firm KJD had been instructed by one of the two firms to recover an undisclosed sum before deciding to seek a winding-up order.

KJD associate Martin Cork said his clients had already adjourned the petition to give Mr Hackney more time to find the money.

Mr Cork said: "Those funds have not come to fruition, so the hearing for the petition is set to go ahead."

The petition going before a Manchester court comes 10 weeks after The Sentinel reported how the company had mysteriously ceased trading while owing dozens of workers two months' wages and unpaid holiday entitlements – estimated to be worth around £100,000.

A number of creditors involved in fitting out the company's premises in Old Hall Street and staff recruitment have claimed to be owed a further £150,000.

Mr Hackney has told The Sentinel the company was forced to close after he and his wife had death threats.

The 30-year-old entrepreneur claimed he, his wife and their son were forced to leave their home in south Cheshire and were under police protection. Staffordshire Police are continuing to investigate.

If today's petition is granted, the Official Receiver will manage the company's liquidation.

This usually involves the appointment of insolvency practitioners to sell the assets of the business to raise money for creditors, who are also likely to include staff who lost their jobs.

The private limited status of Abuse IT means director Mr Hackney will not be liable to any creditors over and above the business's available assets.

Mr Hackney will also be able to continue running other companies where he is a director, including ADP Wireless, Hackney Logistics, ADP Mobile Solutions and Hackney Group Holdings.

Neither representatives from Hulme Upright Manning, which was project manager of the office refurbishment, nor Stoke-based Little Dreams would comment.

Today's hearing could damage efforts by staff to claim wages, holiday pay and expenses through a mass claim to an Employment Tribunal because if Abuse IT is wound up there may be less money to allocate to claims.

However, workers can still claim limited cash from a Government fund to help those affected by companies becoming insolvent.

Many of the claims are individual, although a block petition has been lodged on behalf of 24 former Abuse IT workers.

The Sentinel has tracked down 12



'Anyone who has spoken to your newspaper will not be paid'

In a statement to The Sentinel, Paul Hackney said:

I expect this company to go into compulsory liquidation on Monday. Abuse IT should have been wound up months ago, but I was fighting this for the sake of the creditors and staff. This fight was for one reason only – to ensure that everyone got paid and that we were able to recommence trading.

All that I ever wanted was to invest my hard earned money into a new venture that would bring jobs, security and wealth for a significant amount of

people and grant my family those same attributes. All of this comes with risk I know, however the calculations were going to plan. This business was just about to take off when my family and I became a victim of a serious situation. This constant requirement to publicly announce information about my business has made sure that any of my future business activities will be outside of North Staffordshire and South Cheshire.

Anyone that has spoken to your newspaper,

that has had dealings with Abuse IT will not be paid – creditors and staff.

CONTROVERSY: Paul Hackney, pictured in March, inside his Hanley call centre. Inset, how The Sentinel reported the

former workers who have lodged

claims for two months' pay, as well

as a notice period and holiday entitle-

ment.

It is understood some staff have made additional claims for expenses.

Ian Tabinor, a worker who has set up a new firm, a2bit, in Old Hall Street, Hanley, has lodged a claim.

A Tribunal Service spokesman said she could not confirm details of any case pending a hearing date. A period of conciliation is allowed between claimant and employee to settle the dispute.

A spokesman for HMRC said an offence may be committed if a P45 does not tally with actual contributions and urged concerned workers to contact their local tax office.

She said: "If a document says you have paid, say, £6,000 in contributions, and you've only paid £3,000, then that is falsification, which is an offence."

MOD pours scorn on

PAUL

Hackney

claimed

to

be

a

former

captain

in

the

Royal

Artillery

who

was

awarded

the

Queen's

Commendation

deluded 'Walter Mitty'

rank of captain he failed to answer

the question.

MOD checks show he only reached

the lower rank of Lance Bombardier

in the Royal Artillery.

A spokesman said Mr Hackney did not

attend Sandhurst and didn't receive

the Queen's Commendation for

Bravery.

He joined the Army in 1996

and carried out three tours of duty in

the Balkans and received the NATO

medal with the Kosovo clasp.

An MOD spokesman said: "These

medals are given out for service, but it

is possible to receive them even if

you were sat behind a desk for three

months. We do not like people who

make up stories about services in the

armed forces because it tends to

discredit those who serve."

But when asked if he reached the

Computer giant probes 'passing off' claim

AMERICAN computer com-

pany Microsoft is to invest-

igate after Paul Hackney

formed a firm called Microt

oft which his staff say cashed in

on the U.S. software giant's

name.

The maker of the Windows

operating system is to probe

the firm, which is registered

at the premises of Abuse IT in

Old Hall Street, with Mr Hack-

ney listed as