

Landlord fined for ignoring gas safety warnings

A CHESTER landlord has been fined after ignoring repeated warnings about gas safety at a property she rented out in the city.

Nahida Hashim, 28, was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after she failed to arrange for a registered gas engineer to visit a house on Queens Avenue between October 2009 and October 2011.

Chester Magistrates Court was told that landlords are legally required to arrange annual gas safety checks of their properties to ensure the safety of tenants.

However, Ms Hashim neglected to do so despite being contacted on several occasions about the issue.

The court heard she was first contacted by a housing standards officer at Cheshire West and Chester Council in May 2011 asking to see a copy of the Landlord Gas Safety Record for the property.

HSE then wrote to her on two occasions in July after she failed to respond to the council's request, but it also received no reply.

In September, HSE issued Ms Hashim with an improvement notice giving her 21 days to arrange a gas safety check and provide proof it had been carried out. Again, she ignored this.

Nahida Hashim pleaded guilty to breaching the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 by failing to arrange an annual gas safety check and failing to comply with an improvement notice. The landlord, of Tarvin Road in Littleton, was fined £400 and ordered to pay £1,000 in prosecution costs.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Martin Paren said: "Ms Hashim was given three chances to arrange a gas safety check before we issued an improvement notice, but even then she still failed to take any action.

"Unsafe gas appliances are responsible for dozens of deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning in the UK every year. That is why it's a legal requirement for landlords to arrange checks."

Homeowners and landlords can find a registered gas engineer by visiting www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

City in rally talks

CHESTER engaged in preliminary talks over bringing the World Rally Championship back to the city, it has been revealed.

The news comes amid speculation Wrexham is looking likely to host the British round of the championship for the first time in November, as organisers seek to locate the whole of the rally within North Wales.

A Cheshire West and Chester Council spokesman said 'initial discussions' took place with organisers a couple of years ago but did not progress any further. The city has featured on the Rally of Great Britain numerous times in the past, most famously in 1995 when Colin McRae became the first British driver to win the world championship, completing the rally at Chester Racecourse.

Tour guide's insight into Holocaust past



NEW HOME: Phil Clark, of Krakow Tours, with his wife Marta in Poland.



HAUNTING: Auschwitz II Birkenau.



MEMORIAL: A memorial stone at Auschwitz II Birkenau.

Sunday, January 27, is Holocaust Memorial Day. JO HENWOOD talks to Frodsham's Phil Clark, who now lives in Poland, about his tour company which offers in-depth walking tours of Auschwitz

PHIL Clark's first visit to Poland was in 2007 to watch a friend's son canoeing for Great Britain. It was there that he met his wife Marta and, 37 trips and two years later, the couple got married.

The former Manor Junior School and Helsby Grammar School pupil helped 35 friends and family make the journey for the wedding, which inspired him to set up his own tour company.

He said: "I arranged most of their flights, hotels, gave them walking tours of Krakow, took them to Auschwitz and the Wieliczka salt mine and arranged all their transport. Many of them suggested that as everything had worked so well for their week in Krakow, I should look to set up a business doing the same for other tourists and that's how the idea of Krakow Tours was born.

"Having been on a tour of Auschwitz, with a museum guide on a couple of occasions, I knew it wasn't the best way to see the museum.

"Their tours of Birkenau are cursory to say the least, so I set about learning as much as I could about the camps with a view to being able to give a more in-depth visit to my guests. My tours today allow guests to visit the museum without a guide, I then show them around the best preserved parts of Birkenau, and also other sites in

the area not covered by any other tour company.

"It's now approaching three years since I started the tours and, in that time, I have taken more than 3,200 people to Auschwitz, from 45 different countries.

"I have taken children and other family members of Auschwitz victims and survivors, and have been lucky enough to meet quite a few survivors myself."

One such survivor was the now late Kazimierz Smolen, former director and co-founder of The Auschwitz-Birkenau museum. He died, aged 91, on January 27 last year, the 67th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz. Another was Stella Muller-Madej, author of the book *A Girl from Schindler's List*.

The vast majority of Phil's guests are individual tourists, though he and his two employees do arrange tours for larger groups including schools, older students and adult learning organisations.

Neil Benson, of Gresford, visited Krakow last October with his wife Jo.

He said: "Being on the very spot where the worst atrocities in history happened is a bit overwhelming, and we were still absorbing it all several weeks later.

"Phil's knowledge of the camp, and about

the wartime period generally, added a lot to our trip. It's an experience we will never forget."

Phil divides visitors to Auschwitz into two categories - large tourist groups who rush around the museum, seeing half of what is available, and those with more than a passing interest in the history of the Nazi camp.

Phil said: "Many people have been with me to Auschwitz twice and two people have been three times.

"It's almost impossible to take in the atrocities that occurred at Auschwitz, and it is a very difficult place to describe after a visit, but suffice to say to a man everyone that visits is glad they did. I believe it is a place that every person who has the opportunity, should visit."



ON TOUR: Phil Clark with Jon Mawe-Bion, Christine Mawe-Bion and Sandra Forisky from Wirral.

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CONCENTRATION CAMP: The Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz.