

# Lloyds Libor rigging case dropped by fraud office

Harry Wilson City Editor

The Serious Fraud Office has dropped a criminal investigation into Lloyds Banking Group traders over Libor rigging, ending one of its last live inquiries into the scandal.

It has written to Lloyds and the former traders, saying they are no longer under investigation as the case has not met the threshold required for a prosecution.

The Times understands that one problem faced by the fraud office was the difficulty of finding an expert prepared to provide evidence on the traders' behaviour after a recent controversy involving an expert witness hired by the anti-fraud agency.

It emerged last year that Saul Haydon Rowe, the expert witness in all the fraud office's Libor prosecutions, had asked for help from contacts as he gave evidence, raising questions over his fitness to offer a view on the case.

Mr Haydon Rowe subsequently left the expert witness firm he co-founded, which was paid more than £400,000 by the fraud office for its work on Libor. Mr Haydon Rowe has said that "he acted in good faith at all times during my involvement in these cases".

A fraud office spokesman said: "The SFO has written to certain individuals in the Libor investigation to inform them that they are no longer suspects. The banks concerned, and several witnesses, have been written to as well."

"Having thoroughly investigated and having reviewed the information available to it, the SFO has concluded there was insufficient evidence to take the matter further in respect of these individuals and banks."

Last year, several former Lloyds em-

ployees were interviewed under caution by the fraud office over Libor rigging, several years after the investigation was opened. None of those questioned has been identified.

More than 20 Lloyds and HBOS staff were said to have been aware of or involved in rate manipulation, according to a £218 million settlement agreed by the bank in 2014.

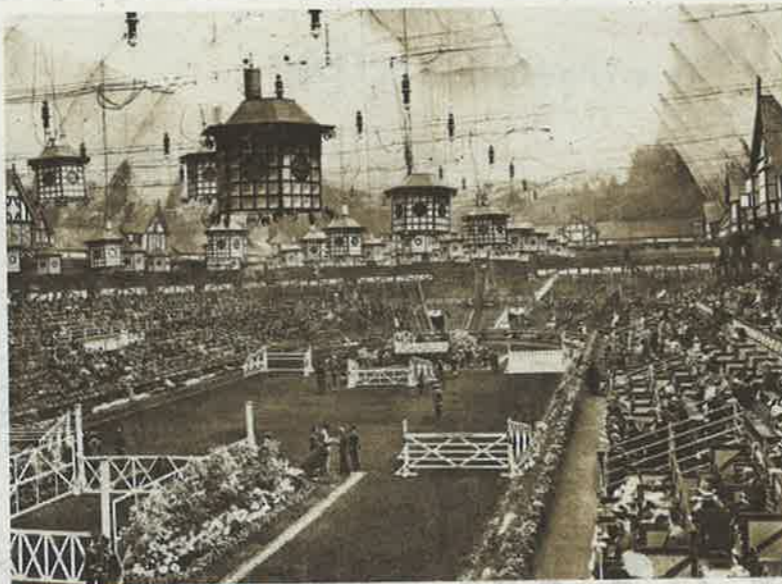
In its latest annual report, Lloyds said that it was co-operating with the fraud office's work as well as with other authorities around the world as investigations continue into the Libor scandal.

The Lloyds settlement contained an admission by the bank that its staff also manipulated the repo rate used by the Bank of England to determine the fees paid by lenders to access the central bank's emergency funding scheme during the financial crisis.

A separate investigation into the rigging of the special liquidity scheme was closed in June 2017 after the fraud office said that it had concluded there was no evidence of criminality.

Libor manipulation was one of the biggest investigations undertaken by the fraud office and the closure of the case against the Lloyds traders appears to leave only one case open, an investigation linked to Barclays and low-balling, six years after the agency first began its work.

The scandal involved the manipulation by some of the world's biggest banks, including Barclays, Deutsche Bank and UBS, of borrowing rates used to price hundreds of trillions of dollars of financial products. Traders manipulating the rate were said to have made millions for themselves and their banks by raising and lowering Libor by fractions of 1 per cent to boost their profits.



## Olympia to be year-round venue with £700m project

The Olympia London Exhibition Centre that has hosted everything from Crufts dog show to a live performance by Jimi Hendrix, and even a Miss World Pageant, is to get a £700 million overhaul (Tom Knowles writes).

Its owners, Deutsche Finance and Yoo Capital, are to transform the west London venue into "a year-round destination in its own right" with plans for the overhaul being produced by the star designer Thomas Heatherwick.

Olympia was designed by the architect Henry Edward Coe and completed in 1886. It was originally the National Agricultural Hall.

The famed domed arch and 170ft arched roof supported by ironwork at the listed building will not be affected by the new

designs, carried out by Heatherwick Studios and architectural firm SPPARC, with the investment designed to enhance the exhibition space. Two more acres of public space will be added, as well as a 1,500-seat theatre, cinema, conference centre and another performing arts venue.

The owners want to capitalise on Olympia's history with the arts, having been host to one of London's first cinemas in 1895 as well as hosting Vivienne Westwood's first show.

There will be two hotels, restaurants, 70,000 sq ft of working areas and 600,000 sq ft of creative offices and studios.

Deutsche Finance and Yoo Capital, which is backed by two German institutional investors and Legal & General, bought Olympia last year for £296 million from Capco, who are regenerating the Earls

Court area. The exhibition and conference centre in Kensington, southwest London, is home to a range of international trade and consumer exhibitions, conferences and events but the Olympia venue had historically been seen as a lesser destination than Earls Court. However, this was demolished by Capco in 2015, meaning that Olympia is now directly competing with Excel in London's Docklands as one of the two big exhibition centres in the capital.

John Hitchcox, chairman of Yoo Capital, whose previous projects have included restoring the former Midland Grand hotel at St Pancras station, said: "As caretakers of Olympia London, we are investing to protect this iconic site and promote it on the global stage as a world-



The exhibition centre, which has hosted everything from horse shows to a Jimi Hendrix concert, is to be revamped with hotels, a theatre and more space if the plans are approved



leading destination for the creative industries. "These proposals reflect consultations and discussions with our community to ensure we create an exciting and inspirational venue with unparalleled facilities."

Planning permission is being submitted in September and designers have said

that if the plans are approved the venue will not be closed during the three to five years of building work.

Heatherwick's studio is best known for recreating the red Routemaster bus, designing the London 2012 Olympic torch and designing the new headquarters for Google in Silicon Valley and London.

## Clifford Chance still has magic touch

Tabby Kinder Professional Services Correspondent

Profits at Clifford Chance rose by 13 per cent to £626 million as a result of higher demand for advice on Brexit and a surge in deals.

The "magic circle" City law firm had

two thirds of its income is collected in foreign currencies, the figures were also boosted by the weakness of the pound against the euro and the dollar.

"Our clients are seeing a very complex legal and regulatory environment at the moment. Unfortunately I don't think the landscape will get any simpler

and regulatory bodies, court judgments, professional qualifications and operating licences between Britain and the 27 EU countries. About one third of Clifford Chance's revenue comes from continental Europe and the firm expects to grow in Luxembourg and Germany after Brexit, Mr Layton said.

## Conflict questions for MPs' advisers

Continued from page 34 business committee, described Carillion's fall as a story of "recklessness, hubris and greed".

The advisers include Gabriel Moss, QC, who declared "764 Carillion shares

## Sorrell battles WPP to buy ad agency

Simon Duke Technology Business Editor

Sir Martin Sorrell is squaring up to WPP in the fight for a coveted €300 million digital advertising agency after suggesting that he would not compete with his former company.

He has entered the running to buy

campaigns for Audi, Mercedes-Benz and Lego, include Accenture, the consulting giant, according to Sky News.

Sir Martin resigned from WPP less than three months ago, after a 33-year reign, following an investigation into his personal conduct. He has strenuously denied that he used company funds to pay for prostitutes, the alleged

tising business, with the backing of major financiers, including Crispin Odey, the hedge fund manager.

He received a boost last weekend when Keith Weed, the marketing chief of Unilever, said he would be willing to work with Sir Martin. "Martin has just announced what he is doing, so I'll wait to see what it is," said Mr Weed, who

## Is Gl deal

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Don't m Sam. the m Depar its sub Britain's ninth big company, Glencore

The move comes after Glencore cunning wheeze payments to its former fixer Dan Gertler US sanctions, by non-US intermediaries

It was important Gertler. He held in the Democratic Congo — dubbed of cobalt", the crucial to batter cars in future. The potential billion

But the gambit looking tricky, spirit if not the sanctions rules a cocking a snook. it backfired, sour relationship with

It's not clear. Responsibility for corruption rules, US Treasury Dept sanctions. The la have nothing to

The £4 billion Glencore valuation suggests investors very seriously, for documents only the Congo, Venezuela and N

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