

ENGLAND AND WALES / JUDGMENT

R v Paul Relton

Source: caselaw.nationalarchives.gov.uk · Research copy typeset by Esheria. Not court-issued or certified.

Neutral Citation Number: [2026] EWCA Crim 328 Case No: 202500461/B5-202404568/A1 IN THE COURT OF APPEAL (CRIMINAL DIVISION) ON APPEAL FROM THE CROWN COURT AT BASILDON (MR RECORDER BACON) [52SE0123523 & 42MR2374124 / 42MR2153124] Royal Courts of Justice Strand, London, WC2A 2LL Tuesday, 24 February 2026 Before: LORD JUSTICE FRASER MRS JUSTICE CHEEMA-GRUBB HIS HONOUR JUDGE LEONARD KC (Sitting as a Judge of the CACD) REX V PAUL RELTON

Computer Aided Transcript of Epiq Europe Ltd, Lower Ground, 46 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1JE Tel No: 020 7404 1400; Email: rcj@epiqglobal.co.uk (Official Shorthand Writers to the Court)

J U D G M E N T (Approved Transcript) LORD JUSTICE FRASER:

1. This is a renewed application for permission to appeal against conviction and an application for an extension of time. In respect of that latter application the extension required is 394 days. It is also a renewed application for permission to appeal against sentence. All three applications have been refused by the Single Judge. The applications have been drafted in person by the applicant himself who has now been released from custody.
 2. The applicant pleaded guilty in the Crown Court at Bristol on 12 December 2023 to one count of stalking involving serious alarm or distress, contrary to section 4A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. This conduct had taken place in September and October 2023 and related to a female complainant. For this he was sentenced to a suspended sentence order, namely 15 weeks' imprisonment suspended for 15 months together with other requirements which are not material.
 3. During the currency of that suspended sentence he offended again in relation to two other young women. He was charged again and pleaded guilty on 16 July 2024 to two counts, one was stalking involving serious alarm or distress contrary to the same section (section 4A(1) of the Protection from Harassment Act) and the second count of stalking without serious alarm or distress, contrary to section 2A of the Protection from Harassment Act
1997. He was committed to the Crown Court for sentence and this took place in November 2024 by Mr Recorder Bacon KC in the Crown Court at Basildon. He received sentences of 10 months' imprisonment on the first count, 4 months' imprisonment on the second count to

run concurrently, making a total of 14 months, and the suspended sentence was also activated in part and he received a consecutive sentence of 3 months' imprisonment in respect of that. His total sentence was therefore 13 months' imprisonment. A restraining order was also imposed after the first conviction and that was then amended in terms of duration and those the subject of the order after the second one to a term of 10 years.

4. The facts can be described very briefly as the pattern of all of the offending was the same. He met each of the young women on the dating app "Hinge" and started an intimate relationship with each of them. These each lasted a few weeks. After a period of a few weeks each of the young women found his behaviour difficult in certain ways and ended the respective relationships. He reacted by sending them very many messages which would usually lead to his accounts being blocked whether on Instagram or other social media. He would then create or move to other different accounts and continue his messaging of the young women. This behaviour was accompanied by numerous phone calls and voicemail messages and in some instances attending at their houses or flats, parking his car nearby and so on. The effect on the three young women was broadly the same and highly detrimental to each of them.
5. In view of the relatively short nature of this ruling on these applications, we wish to make it clear we have read all the case papers including the submissions made by the applicant and his comments to the Registrar of the Court of Appeal Office in respect of the summary, as he wished to challenge certain aspects of the summary document. He sent an email to the Registrar dated 16 October 2025, which runs to 11 pages and contains numerous submissions of fact and references to different cases including *R v Khan & Khan* (2018); *R v Mubarak* (2022) and *Nicholas v Barnes* (2025).
6. The applicant has previous convictions for similar behaviour in 2014. Certain aggravating features were present in this offending which can be stated. He breached his bail conditions not to contact one complainant within only a few weeks. He committed the second and third offences whilst actually under the suspended sentence order for the first offence. His previous convictions are for like behaviour and are concerning. They were some time ago but it does appear he has not learned that this sort of behaviour is criminal and how damaging it is for the victims. There was however an interval in his offending since 2014 to the instant offences and it is right that that is acknowledged.
7. In respect of each of the three complainants the applicant ignored their numerous requests for him to stop his behaviour and, after he was blocked, he would increase his attempts to gain contact with each of them with many requests to unblock him. His messages are of increasingly concerning content and include some in which he claims he will "end it". On one occasion he came to one of the three complainants' houses and parked his car nearby; on another occasion, as she arrived home and parked her car, when she saw him nearby and attempted to drive away, he stood in front of her car physically to prevent her. There was not just messaging and electronic communication, although that is concerning enough. He also physically approached the complainants on different occasions and on one occasion posted a iPhone as a present through one of the complainants' letter boxes.

8. The applicant was represented by counsel when he pleaded guilty and he was represented by counsel when he was sentenced. In sentencing, the judge at Basildon explained the conduct was stalking and harassment of a most unacceptable kind which caused persistent distress to the victims. The similar behaviour for the second and third offences had taken place at approximately the same time and had effectively overlapped.
9. The judge assessed the more serious offence as the lead offence and categorised it as towards the bottom end of category B1 and the top end of category B2, which he said correctly met the facts and circumstances of the offending when the different victims were taken into account. He identified the starting point for category 2 as 36 weeks with a range of between 12 weeks and 1 years and 6 months' custody. He considered factors increasing seriousness were the previous convictions and that the offending in one respect was committed whilst on police bail in relation to the other count. He imposed the sentences to which we have already referred.
10. The applicant seeks leave to appeal his conviction on the grounds he was not properly advised and that the judge effectively either failed to advise him or pressured him into pleading guilty. Criticisms of his counsel means that this Court has the benefit of the input of his counsel at the time as the applicant provided the relevant waiver of privilege to permit these criticisms of what had occurred on those earlier occasions to be properly considered by this Court. These applications together with the responses of his trial counsel were put before the Single Judge as required under section 31 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 and the Single Judge, as we have explained, rejected all of them.
11. The applicant's trial counsel denies expressly there was any pressure put upon the applicant to plead guilty and as part of his response to the criticisms produced emails showing exactly the advice which was given to him at the time. We have read those emails and that advice. In our judgment, it shows entirely proper and professional advice, making it clear that, although credit was available for early pleas of guilty, any decision to do so was something that the applicant had to make entirely of his own volition. At one point in the emails there is discussion originated by the applicant of the potential of what he calls "a plea deal" with the prosecution potentially accepting a guilty plea to the less serious charge in exchange for the most serious charge not being proceeded with. This was wholly unacceptable to the CPS and it was explained by his trial counsel to him that although that was a course of action which had been opened by way of discussion, the position of the CPS on that was highly unlikely to change. Such a discussion does not sit very well with a claim now that he was pressured into pleading guilty.
12. Because the applicant was acting for himself on his application for leave to appeal and did not have the benefit of legal advice the Single Judge explained in extraordinary detail why he was refusing these applications. His written reasons run to some pages in length: "I have considered the papers in your case and your grounds of appeal with care. The reasons you give for the length of time taken to advance an appeal do not amount to a good reason. Nevertheless, I have considered the substance of your appeal and do not consider that it is

reasonably arguable. In these circumstances, I refuse the extension of time. You pleaded guilty to one count of stalking involving serious harm or distress, pursuant to section 4A(1) of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. You say that you accept that you are guilty of an offence of harassment (under section 2 of the PfHA) but that your plea of guilty was on the basis of incorrect advice, and that you were not told that the test was 'A ought to know that A's course of conduct will cause B serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on B's usual day-to-day activities if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct would cause B such alarm or distress.' In coming to your decision, you say that you were specifically advised that in pleading not guilty to the more serious offence, you could not have been found guilty of the lesser offence as it was not on the indictment. You say therefore that the advice you received was incorrect as a matter of law. You also say that at your first hearing at the Crown Court when your counsel requested an adjournment 'the judge...pretty much pressured me that I should be pleading guilty to this charge'. Your grounds of appeal are not reasonably arguable. The starting point is that a defendant who has admitted facts which constitute an offence by an unambiguously and deliberately intended plea of guilty cannot ordinarily appeal against conviction, since there is nothing unsafe about a conviction based upon his own voluntary confession in open court. However, it is right that as a matter of principle, incorrect legal advice and/or pressure from a judge may constitute a valid basis of appeal. As to incorrect legal advice, your counsel has responded that he advised that you would likely be convicted, and that his advice was to plead guilty in order to ensure an appropriate credit. He explained that a plea to the lesser offence (plain harassment) was not acceptable to the prosecution. He denies that he did not explain that the alternative verdict was not open. He also denies that any pressure was put on you by him or the judge. Together with his lengthy comments, counsel attached a number of email exchanges containing the advice he gave. In that advice to you, he says in terms that harassment is an alternative verdict that is available to the jury. It is not reasonably arguable, therefore, that the incorrect legal advice you assert was given. It was not: the correct legal advice was given. Moreover, having read the witness evidence from the complainant, Katie Nash, setting out (a) the nature and extent of your communications to her and (b) the impact your behaviour was having on her day-to-day, including fear and extreme anxiety affecting her working and personal life, the measured and sensible advice given to you by your counsel is entirely unsurprising. It is not reasonably arguable that your plea was predicated on incorrect legal advice, and it is likely that you obtained a better outcome by way of sentence than you would have done had you pleaded not guilty but were, as was likely, found guilty. I have also read the transcript of the PTPH hearing at which you say you were pressured by the judge. This is a hopeless complaint. The only arguably relevant exchange was when the judge said as follows: "OK. Right. Read nothing into this, Paul Relton. This is the time for you to consider your position and to have time and facilities for the preparation of your defence. If there is something on offer, get it on the table as soon as possible, and that puts you in the best possible position for credit for plea. More than that I can't say.... Work through the detail of this because if you don't go through the detail of it, you're the one that risks the injustice, not me". These

remarks merely pointed out the fact that if you decided to plead guilty to an offence, the sooner you did it the better it was for you. That was an entirely appropriate comment. It is not reasonably arguable that this constituted pressure from the judge.” Refusing leave to appeal sentence the Single Judge gave the following reasons: “I have considered the papers in your case and your grounds of appeal. On 12th December 2023, you pleaded guilty to one count of Stalking involving serious harm or distress (s4A(1) Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (‘PHA 1997’)). This involved the complainant, Katie Nash. You were sentenced to a Suspended Sentence Order, 15 weeks imprisonment suspended for 18 months (with requirements to complete 75 hours of Unpaid Work and to complete the Building Better Relationships programme). On 16th July 2024, you pleaded guilty to one charge of Stalking causing serious harm or distress (s4A(1) PHA 1997) – the complainant being Jessica Tucker - and one charge of Stalking without serious harm or distress (s2A(1) PHA 1997) – the complainant being Louise Mascall. On 25th November 2024, you were sentenced to 10 months imprisonment (re Tucker) and 4 months’ imprisonment, concurrent (re Mascall). Having committed an offence during the operational period of the suspended sentence imposed on 13th February 2024 at Bristol Crown Court, the suspended sentence was activated in part, with a reduced term of imprisonment of 3 months, consecutive to the 10 months imprisonment (total sentence – 13 months’ imprisonment). You assert in relation to the Tucker offending:

- (1) An error in offence category. You say it was C2 not B2, because the offending was not ‘persistent’ and/or was not ‘intended to maximise fear or distress’. Having read not only the sentencing remarks but the witness evidence of Ms Tucker, this is not reasonably arguable. The description of your conduct as persistent was entirely justified by the sentencing judge, and he was, on the basis of the evidence, entitled to conclude that it was intended to maximise fear and distress. Moreover, in reaching his conclusion as to the application of guidelines, the judge was taking into account the totality of offending (both victims) in sentencing on the s4 count as the lead offence. It is not reasonably arguable that the judge erred.
- (2) You say insufficient regard was had to mitigation. As part of the overall assessment, the judge was entitled to conclude that weighing such limited mitigation as there was against the aggravating factors (previous convictions, commission whilst on bail and in breach of suspended sentence for similar conduct), overall, the appropriate sentence was towards the top of the overall category range;
- (3) You say you were ‘overcharged’. In circumstances where you pleaded guilty, this is not relevant. You were sentenced, as set out above, for the appropriate charge and your conduct was not reasonably arguable wrongly categorised. You complain in relation to the Mascall offending;
- (4) that the sentencing procedure was flawed, because there was not a full explanation of where the offending sat in respect of the guidelines. As you rightly identify, the judge focussed less on the precise analysis in light of his decision that this offending would be concurrent. That

absence of explanation does not mean of itself that the sentence is manifestly excessive. Overall, 10 months for the totality of offending was not arguably manifestly excessive. You also complain that the 10 year restraining order was disproportionate. It is not reasonably arguable in light of your overall, and in particular, repeat offending and the distress caused to the victims together with the judge's view that the imposition of the lengthy period was part of the overall sentencing structure that the period was manifestly excessive. Moreover, the power of the Court to vary or discharge the order by further order under s5(4) is an important safeguard, and the Court of Appeal is unlikely to interfere with the terms of a restraining order where, if and when it is appropriate to do so, it is open to make an application to vary or discharge the order (see R v Debnath [2005] EWCA Crim 3472 and paragraph 20(5))."

13. We cannot improve on those reasons which, in our judgment, are a model of their kind. We would add only this. The extension of time required is in excess of 1 year. That is a significant period. To justify such a length of time there would have to be very good reasons explaining why that delay had occurred and why the applicant ought to be granted such a lengthy extension. There is nothing in the purported explanation provided by the applicant to this Court which would justify such an extraordinarily long extension in any event. However, there is no merit in the two substantive applications in our judgment in any event, regardless of the extension of time that is required. These three applications are all without any merit whatsoever and therefore are all refused for the reasons given in writing by the Single Judge. Epiq Europe Ltd hereby certify that the above is an accurate and complete record of the proceedings or part thereof. Lower Ground Floor, 46 Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1JE Tel No: 020 7404 1400 Email: Rcj@epiqglobal.co.uk

Source & reproduction note

Judgment wording, source notices and original paragraph numbers are retained. Esheria supplies the layout and this PDF's page numbers; these are not the source pagination. This is a research copy, not an official or certified court document. Check quotations, citations and publication restrictions against the original source before relying on it.

ORIGINAL SOURCE <https://caselaw.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ewca/crim/2026/328>

CASE PAGE <https://chat.esheria.ai/case-law/england-and-wales/r-v-paul-relton-2026>

Prepared on 24 October 2026 · Esheria