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Max Hill QC: Terror watchdog appointed as new head of scandal-hit Crown Prosecution Service

Barrister pledges to 'restore public trust' in CPS following disclosure scandal

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Max Hill QC has been appointed as the new director of public prosecutions ()

Max Hill QC is leaving his role as the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation to become the director of public prosecutions later this year.

He vowed to “restore public trust” in the CPS amid efforts to improve the way **evidence is shared** between police and lawyers.

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Director of public prosecutions criticised for leadership failings

Its current head **Alison Saunders** insisted she was not pressured to step down by the **government** over the scandal, which peaked with the collapse of several rape cases late last year.

She will continue in her post until 31 October, ending a five-year term that

also saw heavy criticism over the handling of false child sexual abuse allegations, budget and staff cuts.

The attorney general’s officer said her successor would bring a “unique combination of legal expertise and public service” to the role, having prosecuted high-profile cases including the murder of **Damilola Taylor**, a 10-year-old schoolboy stabbed to death in south London.

Mr Hill, who has also acted in fraud, corporate crime and serious violence cases, said he was “honoured” to become the next director of public prosecutions.

“I am grateful to Alison Saunders for her service and look forward to building on her legacy,” he added. “This is a challenging time for the CPS, with the rise in complex cases and negative publicity about its handling of **disclosure** in some cases.

Alison Saunders says she ‘doesn’t think’ people are in jail when they shouldn’t be

“I have seen first-hand the sterling work of the CPS and I am determined to restore public trust in all of its work.”

The attorney general, Geoffrey Cox QC, said Mr Hill was a “distinguished and extremely experienced” Queen’s Counsel who has demonstrated a profound commitment both to the criminal justice system and to public service”, adding: “I am very grateful to him for taking on these onerous responsibilities.

“I am confident that he will be a good and collaborative leader of the Crown Prosecution Service and a principled and strongly independent chief prosecutor. The public will rightly expect nothing less. He will now build on the achievements of Alison Saunders, to whom I am grateful for her 32 years of public service.

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Rapists could attempt to overturn convictions amid disclosure scandal

“The role of DPP is difficult and requires exceptional qualities of judgment and character. I am looking forward to working with the new director.”

Mr Hill is to leave his post as the head of Red Lion Chambers and independent reviewer of terrorism

to be “unnecessary”.

Speaking to [The Independent last year](#) he said that in an “ideal world” there would be no need for specific terror offences.

“We should not legislate in haste, we should not use the mantra of ‘something has to be done’ as an excuse for creating new laws,” he said. “We should make use of what we have.”

He recently sounded a [warning over proposed laws in the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill](#), telling MPs that criminalising the viewing of terrorist material three times or more and the making of “reckless” statements lacked safeguards and “cross a line”.

Chris Henley QC, vice chair of the Criminal Bar Association, said Mr Hill will give the CPS “at a time of critical change a first class legal brain steeped in proven experience at the highest level in both prosecution and defence work, who can re-energise a fundamental pillar of the criminal justice system.

“The government needs to back the incoming director of public prosecutions, with sustainable funding to reverse years of damaging cuts.”

A London solicitors’ firm that uncovered some of the disclosure issues at the CPS warned that Mr Hill may face an “uphill battle”.

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Anti-terror laws should be scrapped, says Government legal adviser

Nigel Richardson, a criminal defence partner at Hodge Jones and Allen, said: “While the CPS’s disclosure issues are well documented, the complexity of crime is increasing – thanks largely to technology – and so too are the public’s expectations for

successful prosecutions.

“Anyone working in the criminal justice system will tell you that resources at the CPS are paper-thin and even in the face of judicial threats about delays, nothing changes. All the while, victims are left waiting for justice, while defendants’ lives are suspended in time, often for years on end.”

The most recent crime statistics show that **almost half of criminal investigations are closed with no suspect identified**, and the proportion ending with someone being charged or summoned to court fell to just 9 per cent in the year to March.

been gravely underestimated by the CPS.

“Ownership of performance rests with the director of public prosecutions, who did not sufficiently recognise the extent and seriousness of failures,” a statement said. “The report concludes that this was not aided by data collected by the CPS, which may have underestimated the number of cases which were stopped with disclosure errors by around 90 per cent.”

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A CPS review completed last month found 47 rape and sexual offence cases were stopped within six weeks because evidence had not properly been shared with the defence, but MPs said a “poor data collection regime” meant many more cases affected by disclosure errors were not counted.

The Justice Committee also called on the government to consider increasing funding across the criminal justice system, which is

currently under pressure from rising crime, terrorism and the impact of post-2010 budget cuts.

Police and prosecutors have pointed to the explosion of evidence caused by smartphones, which can each contain tens of thousands of images and messages.

Police officers are legally obliged to examine all evidence and pass it on, whether it supports or hinders prosecution, but have been accused of “unconscious bias” against suspects by the Criminal Bar Association.

A National Disclosure Improvement Plan has already been put in place by the CPS, the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing, including improved training and protocols to hand all multimedia evidence to defence lawyers digitally.

A separate review of disclosure by the attorney general is ongoing.