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Jehovah's Witness congregation lodges appeal with charity tribunal over statutory inquiry

25 July 2014 by Sam Burne James, 3 comments

The Manchester New Moston Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses challenges the decision of the Charity Commission to open the inquiry over safeguarding issues and trustees' compliance with charity law



Manchester New Moston Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

A Manchester-based Jehovah's Witness congregation has lodged an appeal with the charity tribunal against the Charity Commission's decision to open a statutory inquiry into safeguarding issues at the charity.

In June, the commission announced inquiries into the Manchester New Moston Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses and the religion's governing body in the UK, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Britain, amid concerns about safeguarding and whether trustees have complied with charity law.

The regulator first looked into the Manchester congregation after revelations came to light in May that a former trustee of the charity, who served nine months in prison for the indecent of assault of two girls, was allowed to question his victims in front of a congregation of elders after his release.

A spokesman for the Watch Tower said at the time the inquiries were announced that there would be appeals against both. An appeal was lodged last week in the name of the six trustees of the Manchester-based congregation, according to an update to the tribunal register of cases, published online yesterday.

The same spokesman said today that the Watch Tower would also appeal against the inquiry opened into it, either in the tribunal or elsewhere. "At the moment we're looking at what our legal position is, and we're considering whether to bring a judicial review in the High Court," he said.

Appeals against the opening of statutory inquiries are becoming more frequent – this is the fifth review application received by the tribunal so far this year, compared with two in 2013, none in 2012 and one in 2011, according to the register of cases.

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