

## Drugs gang sentenced to over 90 years

**A 22 STRONG GANG** responsible for flooding the North West of England with drugs with a street value of at least £2.5million have been sentenced to a total of over 90 years.

Cocaine, Mephedrone, Amphetamine and Cannabis were all imported and distributed by the gang, led by Peter Bowden, and his deputies Gordon Waters and Craig Rooks.

The gang were arrested and charged following a complex and lengthy investigation led by Lancashire Constabulary's Serious and Organised Crime Unit spanning three years.

All 22 defendants had pleaded guilty at earlier court hearings throughout late 2012 and early to mid 2013.

The investigation – codenamed Sabine – uncovered a sophisticated criminal enterprise to import and distribute drugs which included smuggling mephedrone into the UK from China and cocaine from Holland.

The gang also used methods such as ditching mobile phones and changing the vehicles they used to try to throw police off the scent.

During the investigation police seized over five kilos of cocaine with a street value in excess of £550 thousand pounds, Over 30 kilos of mephedrone with a street value in excess of £300,000, 125 kilo bags of previously used packaging containing mephedrone worth at street level in excess of £1.5 million, over 15 kilos of amphetamine with a street value in excess of £150,000, and 2 kilos of skunk cannabis worth £25,000. Together, the street value exceeds £2.5 million.

Officers also found mixing tubs, a heat sealing machine and other equipment after raiding two industrial units at Back Ashburton Road and Leamington Road at Blackpool which were used as a laboratory for storing, preparing and mixing large quantities of drugs.

Detective Inspector Graham Gallagher, of Lancashire Constabulary's Serious and Organised Crime Unit, said: "Bowden and his criminal gang were responsible for a major drugs importation and supply network over a significant period of time into and around the North West of England and these significant custodial sentences reflect the gravity of their offending.

"Serious and organised crime affects everyone; ruining lives, driving other crime and instilling fear in our communities. It is incredibly important that people continue to provide the police with information so that we can keep them safe and look for ways to prevent organised crime groups from operating in the future."

Anyone with information about drugs should contact police on **101** or Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**

### Details of the sentences below:

**Peter Bowden** DOB 28/08/1970 of The Glades, Lytham St Annes, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class A and three counts of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 15 years imprisonment.

**Craig Rooks** DOB 08/02/1967 of Division Lane, Blackpool, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class A and three counts of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 10 years imprisonment.

**Gordon Waters** DOB 10/01/1968 of Clifton Drive, Blackpool, pleaded guilty to two counts of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B and one count of fraudulent evasion of a prohibition on the importation of goods. He received 10 years 8 months imprisonment.

**Mark McDonald** DOB 12/09/1983 of Trueman Close, Prenton, Merseyside, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 4 years 1 month imprisonment.

**William McComb** DOB 20/07/1961 of Woodward Road, Birkenhead, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class A and three counts of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He was sentenced to 6 years and 9 months.

**James Harding** DOB 01/01/1991 of Alton, Hampshire pleaded guilty to one count of fraudulent evasion of a prohibition on the importation of goods, one count of possession of criminal property, one count of possession of false identity documents with an improper intention, one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B, possessing a controlled of class B with intent, two counts of possessing a controlled drug of class C with intent, one count of possessing criminal property and one count of converting criminal property. He received 9 years 8 months imprisonment.

**George Murphy** DOB 20/4/1966 of New Hall Lane, Preston, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class A and one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 6 years three months imprisonment.

**Aaron Pitts** DOB 25/02/1977, of Colwyn Ave, Blackpool pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class A and one count of conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 5 years 8 months imprisonment.

**Simon Rimmer** DOB 29/05/1961 of West Park Drive, Blackpool pleaded guilty to allowing premises to be used to produce a controlled drug of class B. He was sentenced to 9 months suspended for 12 months.

**Richard Millington** DOB 05/08/1973 of Addison Road, Fleetwood, pleaded guilty to being concerned in the supply of a controlled drug to another. He was sentenced to 26 weeks suspended for 12 months.

**Jeffrey Wright** DOB 24/01/1972 of Victoria Street, Fleetwood pleaded guilty to being concerned in the supply of a controlled drug to another. He was sentenced to 18 months suspended for 18 months.

**Jonathan Booth** DOB 22/08/1965 of Valentia Road, Blackpool pleaded guilty to fraudulent evasion of a prohibition on the importation of goods. He received 24 months imprisonment.

**Naomi Booth** DOB 19/11/1977 of Valentia Road, Blackpool, pleaded guilty to producing a controlled drug. She received a 13 month sentence suspended for 2 years.

**Scott Walker** DOB 10/07/1989 of Low Moor Road, Blackpool, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B and assisting an offender. He received 24 months imprisonment.

**Michael Footit** pleaded guilty to being concerned in the supply of a controlled drug to another. He was given a 12 month sentence suspended for 18 months.

**Kevin O'Connor** pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply. He received three years nine months imprisonment.

**Stephen Bull** DOB 21/05/1979 of Mowbray Road, Fleetwood pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 26 weeks imprisonment.

**Christian Farram** DOB 09/03/1979 of Dinmore Ave, Blackpool pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B. He received 33 weeks imprisonment.

**Carl Taylor** DOB 10/05/1982 of St Andrews Road South, Lytham St Annes, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B and two counts of possession of a controlled drug. He received 22 months imprisonment.

**Dominique Halshaw** DOB 16/01/1988 of St Andrews Road South, Lytham St Annes pleaded guilty to possession of a controlled drug. She received a two year conditional discharge.

**Glenn Knight** DOB 03/12/1986 of Alderley Road, Wallasey, Merseyside pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class A, conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B, possession of identity documents with improper intention and possession of articles for use in frauds. He received four years six months imprisonment.

**Sair Hamza** DOB 08/03/1962 of Devonshire Road, Blackpool pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply a controlled drug of class B and possession of criminal property. He received three years seven months imprisonment.