# Tory councillor sentenced for 14 years of voyeurism against tenants



In the West Yorkshire borough of Calderdale, Tory councillor Robert Holden, 51, was known for his community spirit, frequently volunteering to assist the elderly and offering help to those in need. However, unbeknownst to locals, behind this seemingly benevolent exterior lay the actions of a serial sexual predator who operated covertly for 14 years. Holden systematically filmed at least 28 female tenants at Row Farm, his four-bedroom residence located in Sowerby Bridge, using hidden cameras placed in bathrooms and bedrooms.

The revelation of Holden's misconduct came to light when Heidi Marney, a mother of two, discovered a camera in the bathroom that had been recording her. Following her report to the authorities, Holden was arrested in November 2020, during which he labeled Heidi a liar. The local community, having placed great trust in Holden, initially sided with him, despite Heidi's distress, which manifested as panic attacks as she feared she was not alone in falling victim to his actions.

In March 2022, following an investigation, Holden admitted guilt to 31 charges of voyeurism and seven counts of computer misuse, in addition to accessing private images from devices that clients had entrusted to him for repair. His recording spree, which spanned from 2006 to 2020, involved capturing women during their most intimate moments, including changing clothes, showering, and engaging in sexual activities. In a sentencing hearing at Bradford Crown Court in September 2023, Judge Sophie McKone condemned Holden for betraying the trust of his victims while leading an ostensibly respectable life, stating it was “hard to think of a worse breach of trust.” He was sentenced to six years and two months in prison.

Heidi, who has since waived her anonymity and appeared in a documentary titled "Peeping Tom: The Landlord And His Secret Cameras," conveyed the depth of her shock and betrayal in her statements. Reflecting on Holden's façade, she remarked, “Everybody loved and trusted Rob. He was the kindest man you could meet.” However, she realised he was manipulating vulnerable individuals like herself. Describing her initial impression of Holden as a family friend when she moved in as a lodger in December 2019, Heidi recounted the troubling encounters that escalated over time, as Holden increasingly engaged in suggestive behaviour while trying to maintain the guise of friendship.

Notably, the dynamic shifted significantly when Heidi began to feel uncomfortable with Holden’s remarks and actions, despite initially dismissing her concerns as overreactions. Her suspicions heightened when she received an unsettling text from him while taking a brief excursion to meet a potential date. This prompted her to investigate further, ultimately leading to her discovery of the hidden camera.

After alerting the police, Heidi faced the difficulties that came with the fallout of her allegations, including a wave of disbelief from those around her, many of whom initially believed Holden’s denials. Heidi acknowledged the challenges of being regarded as a liar in her community, stating that Holden had spun a narrative against her, resulting in victim shaming.

As the investigation progressed and additional victims began to come forward, Heidi took proactive measures. She searched for former tenants of Holden to compile a list of potential victims, which proved vital in the uncovering of his extensive criminal activities. The community’s perception of Holden shifted only after multiple victims started to speak out, illustrating the manipulative nature of Holden and the impact of his actions.

Holden’s behaviour became even more brazen when, after failing to appear for a subsequent court session, he was found in Cape Verde, leading to his eventual extradition to the UK, where he faced trial. His crimes, noted for their severity and the emotional toll on his victims, included not only voyeurism but also the illicit collection of intimate images.

The emotional repercussions of Holden's actions were laid bare during the sentencing hearing, where numerous victims submitted impact statements highlighting the profound distress and life-altering effects they experienced due to Holden’s misconduct. One victim described feeling “stupid, empty, worthless, and ashamed,” while another spoke of losing their job and children as a direct result of the trauma inflicted.

Following Holden’s sentencing, Heidi expressed a sense of relief but also acknowledged the emotional turmoil that lingered. She reflected on her journey towards healing, stating that the ordeal taught her the importance of resilience and strength in the face of violation. Today, she continues to promote awareness of such predatory behaviour, influencing others while fostering a sense of empowerment and vigilance within her community. "Peeping Tom: The Landlord And His Secret Cameras," the documentary featuring Heidi's experience, is available for streaming on Channel 5.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cps.gov.uk/yorkshire-and-humberside/news/calderdale-ex-councillor-jailed-secretly-filming-32-victims> - This article corroborates the information about Robert Holden's conviction for secretly filming 32 victims over many years and his eventual sentencing to six years and two months in prison. It also highlights his guilty plea to multiple counts of voyeurism and computer misuse.
* <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ex-councillor-jailed-for-voyeurism-on-vast-scale-/61210> - This article supports the claim that Robert Holden was sentenced for 'voyeurism on a vast scale,' describing his crimes and the impact on his victims. It also mentions his extradition from Cape Verde after he failed to attend a court hearing.
* <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5dee6044e5274a71dbee97d4/Mr_Mark_Lawrence_v_Borough_Council_of_Calderdale_1810800.2018_-Reserved.pdf> - Although this document does not directly relate to Robert Holden, it provides context about employment and legal proceedings within Calderdale, which can help understand the environment where such crimes might occur.
* <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/492eca/siteassets/publications/benchbooks/evidence/evidbb.pdf> - This Evidence Benchbook from Michigan Courts is not directly relevant to the specific case of Robert Holden but provides a general framework for understanding how evidence is handled in legal proceedings, including criminal cases involving misuse of technology.
* <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Report-of-the-Impeachment-Inquiry-of-Joseph-R.-Biden-Jr.-President-of-the-United-States.pdf> - This report does not relate to Robert Holden or the described events in Calderdale but is an unrelated legal document concerning a different investigation.