

Durham Man Jailed for Rape and Stalking Offences

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A 29-year-old man has been sentenced to 10 years in prison after stalking and raping a woman in Durham, just weeks after receiving a suspended sentence for unrelated sexual offences.

The sentencing of Michael Lesko of Bridlington took place on Thursday, July 24, at Durham Crown Court. He was handed a 10-year custodial sentence along with an extended three-

year licence period, due to the severity of the offences and the risk he poses to the public. The judge labelled him a “dangerous” individual.

Judge Richard Bennett told the court: “You repeatedly seek to place blame on everyone but yourself, and you completely failed to take any responsibility for your conduct.” He added, “You are someone who is a sexual predator who has no insight into your offending.”

The court also heard that Lesko’s crimes were committed shortly after he had been given a suspended sentence for voyeurism and sexual assault on another woman. The judge referenced this history in explaining the extended sentence, stating that Lesko demonstrated a pattern of behaviour and posed a continuing risk to women.

Outside the courtroom, Detective Gary Tinkler of Durham Police commended the bravery of the victim and condemned Lesko’s conduct. “Lesko is a controlling and dangerous offender who poses a high risk to women,” he said. “He has shown no remorse and was described during sentencing as living in a fantasy world where he takes no responsibility for his actions.”

Detective Tinkler added, “I would like to praise the victim involved in this case, whose courage has led to a conviction. Hopefully, she can now close this horrific chapter and begin to move on with her life.”

Lesko travelled over 100 miles to Durham in October last year, where he followed his victim onto a bus, stalked her to her home, and later assaulted her. The woman initially tried to evade Lesko by going into a pub and only left once she believed he was no longer nearby. However, Lesko was waiting outside and attacked her after she left the premises.

The victim reported the incident to Durham Police, also disclosing a previous incident in which Lesko had sexually assaulted and raped her. Following a police investigation, Lesko was charged and later found guilty of rape, sexual assault, stalking, and assault. The conviction followed a trial held in March.

The case highlights the dangers posed by repeat offenders and the importance of robust sentencing when dealing with sexual predators. Authorities continue to urge victims of sexual violence or stalking to come forward and report any incidents to the police, assuring them that support is available.

Lesko will serve at least two-thirds of his 10-year sentence before being eligible for parole, followed by the extended three-year monitoring period. He will also be placed on the sex offenders register for life.