

## **Statement of Peter Faulding in response to the BBC documentary**

### **‘Finding Nicola’**

Every drowning is tragic and devastating for families. The very public nature of the sad drowning of Nicola Bulley has been made even more traumatic for her family and friends by being thrust into the public eye, having every aspect of their lives scrutinized, forgetting that there are real people at the heart of this case.

The BBC Documentary ‘Finding Nicola’ which aired on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October has once again portrayed myself and my team unfairly and I want to set the record straight. It is with regret that I feel the need to release this information to the public, evidence that my search for Nicola Bulley was sadly successful, but was not fully investigated or disclosed to the public.

The Specialist Group International (SGI) Underwater Search Team have been locating and recovering drowning victims for many years, recovering on average 10 victims per year. We have an exemplary record of locating victims quickly, providing relief and dignity to grieving families. We pride ourselves on our professional and empathetic approach and have always worked seamlessly with the police and other partners.

SGI was called upon to assist with the search for Nicola by her partner Paul. We did so free of charge as we had the relevant equipment and expertise and simply wanted to help a family in distress, after many days of Nicola not being found.

My statement that ‘if Nicola was there, I would have found her’ comes from nearly 3 decades of experience. Since 1999, I have pioneered the use of side scan sonar for forensic and underwater search in the UK. I make no apologies for being confident in my and my team’s skills.

I stand by my previous statement outlining our version of events that I located the body of Nicola Bulley at 10.34 on 7<sup>th</sup> February within 6 minutes. Unfortunately, it is now time to defend myself and my team’s unblemished reputation and stand up for the truth. We have always carried out our role with honesty and integrity and it was never our intention to cause any conflict with the police or the family. However, we feel that it is in the public’s interest to know that my findings have not been thoroughly investigated and at no point has any live side scan sonar data been requested by the police,

the Coroner or the College of Policing despite my many attempts to provide it. Without this very important data, no information to support the images would be available and no conclusions would be possible to make. Yet, unnamed experts made conclusions in the College of Policing Report based on basic PDF images alone.

I welcome any opportunity to have an open and transparent meeting with members of Lancashire Police, their dive team, the College of Policing and the experts that they called upon in the report, to review all the available evidence with media present.

It is important that the truth be fully investigated for the sake of Nicola and her family, for public confidence, for the future of underwater search and for lessons to be learned to prevent this from ever happening again.

Please see my correspondence with the College of Policing in the link below.

**Peter Faulding**

CEO Specialist Group International.