

## Chief Executive's Report, September 2023

### Introduction

1. The team has capitalised on the quieter summer to make some great progress this month, particularly in relation to engaging creditors and getting ready to launch accreditation. I had some restorative time off as well and it was excellent to see the team push on whilst I was on leave.
2. We are now gearing up for a busy September and October as we launch accreditation and start a fresh round of external engagements and speeches across England and Wales.

### Levy for 2023/24

3. We have now received payment of the levy for 2023/24 from all of the firms from which we requested payment (the eight largest firms). These payments were received in good time and without significant challenge, which has allowed us to focus on delivering against our workplan without distraction. This has been an encouraging process and we hope for a similarly smooth process when we request payment from the smaller firms in October.

### Current cash position

4. The cash position at the end of August was approximately £776,228k, against a forecast of £810k in our budget. This includes the £176,000 loan from CIVEA, which is due to repaid by March 2024.
5. The main reason for the budget variation is that we will be seeking levy payments from the remaining firms in October, whereas in our budget we had originally planned to have received all levy income by now. When this income is received, we expect to have a modest surplus on our budget. The Board is reminded that it will be receiving a reforecast for the budget at the October meeting.

### Accreditation

6. We remain on track with our key milestones for launching accreditation in September. Following the last Board meeting, we have worked with our lawyers to develop a final accreditation framework and criteria, which sets out the formal basis for the scheme. We have had further input from our Stakeholder Engagement Forum in developing these. We have also developed the accompanying webpage and other communications material that will go live on Wednesday 6 September.
7. We will open for applications to become accredited in the week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> September, with a four-week initial window prior to publishing our first register of accredited firms.

8. The next policy priorities are to finalise the application forms, finalise the licensing agreement for use of the “ECB accredited” logo and agree the fee scale for licensing of the logo. There are also significant communications activities planned.

### **Research**

9. In July the Board discussed an initial scoping paper on our proposed research project looking at body work video. We remain on track to present a paper with a proposed approach and methodology that reflects the Board’s steer, to the October Board meeting. In the meantime, the team has been working on the following:
  - Developing a powers and parameters briefing
  - Developing a GDPR position paper and obtaining positive endorsement from the ICO for the approach
  - Developing the themes for exploration
  - Drafting a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)
  - Drafting the invitation to tender
10. The next steps are to obtain input from the Stakeholder Engagement Forum and panel of technical experts that we have set up. This is all very positive progress, especially the fact that we have received the ICO’s input and endorsement for our proposed approach to managing the GDPR risks.

### **Creditor engagement**

11. There has been some excellent progress on engaging creditors over the last month. Highlights have included:
  - Severn Trent water became the second water company to publicly commit to only work with ECB accredited providers. We are in advanced discussions with four other water companies about making similar commitments and hope to be able to provide further updates soon.
  - We are also in discussion with a handful of Local Authorities about making commitments to only work with ECB accredited providers and expect some of these to be converted soon, which will hopefully start the ball rolling with other local authorities.
  - We have also had extremely encouraging discussions with the two main procurement organisations in this area, about including ECB accreditation as a qualifier for inclusion in their frameworks. Both are due to commence re-procurement processes soon.
12. On the basis of this work, we are confident that we are building real momentum with creditors and there will soon be others joining Welsh Water, Severn Water and Lowells in committing to only work with ECB accredited providers.

### **Communications and engagement**

13. Since the last time the Board met in June, we have published another CEO blog. This one reflected on our work to expand our evidence base, as well as our positive engagements in Wales. This can be found on our website: [Getting a clearer picture - enforcementconductboard](#)

14. We have continued to grow our social media presence and engagement with the ECB on Twitter and LinkedIn continues to grow.
15. There have been a number of articles and stories in the press this month concerning enforcement action. As the Board is aware, the Chair wrote a letter to the Guardian following an opinion piece that referenced the ECB. This was published by the Guardian and can be seen here: [Tackling poor practice by bailiffs | Poverty | The Guardian](#)
16. We have provided an article for Enforcement News on accreditation, which will be published soon. In terms of stakeholder engagement, it has been a quieter month with leave. However, myself and the team enjoyed an excellent training session on council tax. I also had productive meetings with officials at the MoJ, the High Court Enforcement Officers Association, the Chief Executive of the Vulnerability Registration Service and Qualco (to discuss their enforcement panel model).
17. The team have also been getting out and about a lot, particularly with engagements with creditors (the results of which are set out above).

### **Upcoming engagement**

18. It looks set to be a busy period of external engagement. Over the coming month, we have the following engagements planned:
  - Speaking at the All Party Parliamentary Group of Debt at the Houses of Parliament
  - Speaking at a large series of IRRV regional discussion groups
  - Speaking at the Institute of Money Advisers virtual conference
  - Meeting with Clive Betts MP
  - Visiting a High Court Enforcement firm
  - Attending the CIVEA council meeting to discuss accreditation and answer questions
  - Hosting the next ECB stakeholder engagement forum
  - Speaking at the LGA Resources Board meeting
  - David will be spending some time on the ground in Wales, visiting Welsh Water and then attending the Welsh LGA conference in Llandudno and speaking at the Welsh LGA Executive meeting about the ECB.
19. There are even more conferences and events lined up for October.