

# MOJ BAILIFF REFORM: BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Consultation paper needs to be simplified, according to Treasury and BIS, so consultation faces further delays

By Freddie Dawkins

THE long-awaited Ministry of Justice (MoJ) consultation paper on bailiff law reform and regulation is unlikely to be circulated for some months.

After consideration by all the main Whitehall departments, the paper has been given back to the MoJ team responsible for organising the consultation, and they have been told to simplify the ideas in the paper.

Whitehall sources have told *CCR-PS* that both the Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovations and Skills (BIS) voiced concerns over the complexity of the proposed paper, and have asked for it to be less bureaucratic, that is less red tape involved in both the licensing and regulatory body.

A future regulatory body appears to be a major stumbling block, as the Security Industry Authority was originally pencilled in to become the bailiff industry regulator, but that will be closed down by 2014 and no new body has been formed to implement a regulatory regime – if one should be required at all.

An MoJ spokesman told *CCR-PS*: “The majority of bailiffs are responsible, but too many are not and this cannot be

allowed to continue. We will publish our consultation as soon as we have exhausted our exploration of all the issues in order to ensure the proposals we develop are thorough and will provide the clarity and protection that both debtors and creditors need, as well as the bailiff industry itself.”

Barrie Minney, chairman of the Local Authority Civil Enforcement Forum and senior bailiff at Brighton & Hove City Council, told *CCR-PS*: “It is a bit difficult to comment on something we have not been privy to. However, my concern is that there is now another delay and I can see MoJ just putting this on the back-burner unless there is a change of minister. At the very least consideration should be given, by those departments responsible, to an increase in fees – because I cannot see a generic fee scale being introduced for some time.”

Gareth Hughes, deputy chief executive of Marston Group, told *CCR-PS*: “Tackling the perception of aggressive bailiffs and avoiding excessive regulation of small businesses are not inconsistent government commitments. A simplified, reformed fee structure will do more than



Gareth Hughes, deputy chief executive, Marston Group

anything else to engineer out reputational risk, whilst providing an economic basis for a professional enforcement approach. The current system, which results in more than a third of small bailiff companies generating losses, does not help anybody.”

Steven Everson, director general of CIVEA, told *CCR-PS*: “It would be a body blow to all concerned – debtors, advice agencies and the enforcement industry – if the consultation process is indeed delayed by several more months. The delay in the implementation of the regulations is placing an increasing and unnecessary burden upon small businesses in the industry, something I understood the coalition government had solemnly pledged to reduce.”

## NEW JOBS FOR THE NORTH EAST

TWENTY five new jobs are being created by Northgate Public Services, as the company celebrates a number of new contract wins – including the national Blue Badge Improvement Service for disabled drivers.

The Regional Business Centre, based in Wynyard Business Park near Hartlepool, is currently on the look out for local people to fill a number of new vacancies to work on blue badge, benefits assessment and other support

functions carried out by the centre. The recruitment is underway and is planned to be completed by January 2012.

The centre, which works with local authorities across the UK, opened in 2006 with a staff of just six, and now employs 42 people. It will be involved in delivering the five-year national Blue Badge Improvement Service contract recently awarded to Northgate on behalf of central government and local authorities.

Northgate is also teaming up with Hartlepool College as part of a modern apprenticeship programme. The scheme will offer local young people the opportunity to gain valuable on-the-job experience. The first four students join next month.

Joe Bradley, executive director for Northgate Public Services said: “This is a really exciting time for us as we work to support new economic opportunities in the local area.”