

Consumer Focus Board

Paper 8.1

Title: CEO Report

Purpose: For information

Date of meeting: 16 December 2010

Responsible officer: Mike O'Connor

Prepared by: Mike O'Connor and SMT

Attachments: Directorate Reports

1 Overview

- 1.1 Despite the uncertainty facing the organisation, Consumer Focus continues to deliver for consumers as this paper shows.
- 1.2 I have been invited by David Willetts to join a group looking at transparency of information made available to people contemplating undertaking a course of study. The Government is committed to doing more to provide information around areas such as student satisfaction, ratings, costs, contact times and outcomes. Given that undertaking study will in many cases involve a significant financial commitment, it is clearly vital that consumers are given good information on which to base their choices. I wrote to David Willetts pointing out our expertise in this area, including CF Labs, and this led to the invitation.
- 1.3 I and colleagues met with Philip Lowe the director general for energy at the European Commission and I was struck by how valuable the Commission sees our work on energy. I and colleagues had good meeting with the Civil Mediation Council where I hope there may be progress on our calls for accreditation of mediators. We also had a good meeting with Paula Vennels, the Managing Director of Post Offices Limited where I believe we have a great deal of relevant work to do over the coming months. I and colleagues gave evidence to a number of Parliamentary Committees including the Treasury Select Committee, the Scottish Affairs Committee, the Postal Services Bill Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee.
- 1.4 Much of my time since the last Board meeting has been taken up with dealing with the Government's plans to transfer our functions to Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland. This has involved meetings of the Programme Steering Group for the Consumer Protection Landscape Implementation Programme set up by BIS. I attach an organogram of the structure. We are represented on all the Groups. Other members include: OFT; Citizens Advice; Citizens Advice Scotland; TSI; LGR; and the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers. I was told yesterday that a new group would be set up on "Devolution" although this would only involve Governments. I have met with Gillian Guy of CitA on 8 December. They are now seeking a range of information from us to support their due diligence work.

- 1.5 We have also been busy anticipating a possible budget cut in 2011/12. We are currently consulting the trades unions on a potential redundancy programme. This puts great strain on the organisation and I pay tribute to my colleagues for continuing to deliver high quality work in such difficult circumstances.