Transcript of Closing Remarks - Forward Thinking Conference

The Insolvency Service

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Looking Ahead Together: Academia, Practice, and the Future of Insolvency Law

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Thank you very much. I am delivering these closing remarks also on behalf of the Director of the Centre for Business Law and Practice (CBLP) at the University of Leeds, Professor Duncan Sheehan.

As we come to the end of today's event, I would like to begin by thanking our speakers, panellists, and all of you for your participation and engagement throughout the day. We have heard a fascinating series of presentations spanning artificial intelligence and insolvency practice, capital fluidity, public-interest considerations in insolvency, business distress, SME policy, and consumer insolvency. Together, these discussions have highlighted both the breadth of contemporary insolvency law and the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-sector dialogue.

Today's programme also exemplifies something that has always been central to the work of the Centre for Business Law and Practice at the University of Leeds: bringing together academics, practitioners, policymakers, judges, regulators, and professional bodies to address pressing legal and commercial challenges. The partnership behind today's event is therefore especially fitting.

This year is a particularly significant year for us because 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of the Centre for Business Law and Practice.

Over the past three decades, the Centre has grown into one of the leading business law research centres in the United Kingdom. Today, the CBLP brings together scholars working across company law, banking and finance law, insolvency law, competition law, commercial law, intellectual property law, arbitration, corporate governance, and international economic law.

As we celebrate this milestone year, we have sought not only to reflect on our history but also to engage with our wider community. Throughout the year, we have marked the anniversary through a range of initiatives, including special conferences and events, alumni and member profiles, public engagement activities, website features, communications campaigns, and celebrations highlighting the Centre's achievements, people, and impact over the last three decades.

These activities have reminded us that the Centre's greatest strength has always been its people: our members, alumni, students, visitors, collaborators, practitioners, and friends.

Today's event also provides an opportunity to recognise the Centre's long-standing contribution to insolvency scholarship.

The University of Leeds has been home to some of the most influential insolvency law scholars in the United Kingdom and internationally. We are proud to count figures such as Professor Andrew Keay and Professor Gerard McCormack among our insolvency law community. Their work has shaped debates on corporate rescue, creditor protection, corporate governance, restructuring, cross-border insolvency, and the evolution of insolvency frameworks in the UK, Europe, and beyond.

I am also particularly pleased to note that Dr Casasola and I have had the privilege of teaching insolvency law together at Leeds for the past six academic years. Working with our students over that period has given us a front-row seat to the continuing evolution of insolvency law and practice, and it has reinforced the importance of maintaining a strong dialogue between scholarship, policy, and professional practice.

We are equally fortunate to benefit from the support and engagement of distinguished practitioners and members of our Advisory Board, such as Richard Calnan (Norton Rose Fulbright, London), whose contributions to banking and insolvency law have enriched the Centre's activities and strengthened our links with practice.

The Centre's insolvency profile has also been enhanced through the many visiting scholars and practitioners we have welcomed over the years.

The CBLP has long served as a meeting place for leading international experts working on insolvency, restructuring, banking law, financial distress, and related areas of commercial law. Through visiting fellowships, workshops, conferences, seminars, and collaborative research projects, we have sought to create opportunities for dialogue that extend well beyond individual events and institutions.

These exchanges have reinforced our commitment to building a genuinely international intellectual community around business law and insolvency studies.

Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the Centre is its international outlook. Our members collaborate with colleagues across Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and we regularly host visitors and events that bring together participants from around the world.

Looking ahead, I believe today's discussions point toward several themes that will continue to shape the future of insolvency law.

First, the challenges facing insolvency systems are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected. Technological change, artificial intelligence, geopolitical uncertainty, consumer vulnerability, and the evolving nature of business organisations all raise new questions that insolvency frameworks will need to address.

Second, the future of insolvency law cannot be shaped by academia, practice, or government acting alone. The conversations we have had today demonstrate the value of bringing together diverse perspectives. Scholars contribute critical analysis and long-term thinking. Practitioners provide practical experience and market insights. Policymakers and regulators bring institutional perspectives and implementation expertise.

Progress depends on all of these voices being part of the conversation.

Before I conclude, I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations and thanks to the organising team for bringing together such an excellent programme and for all the work that has taken place behind the scenes to make today's event possible. Events like this require an

enormous amount of planning, coordination, and commitment, and we are all grateful for those efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues, Professor Gerard McCormack and Dr Oriana Casasola, whose scholarship, teaching, and engagement have made significant contributions to the Centre's longstanding strength in insolvency law. Notably, Dr Casasola recently co-organised the Network of Insolvency and Restructuring Scholars (NIRS), providing a new platform for collaboration between Academia and the Insolvency Service. Initiatives like that help maintain Leeds' reputation as an important centre for insolvency law research and teaching.

If there is one message I would like you to take away from today, it is that the future of insolvency law will be shaped not by any single community acting alone, but by continued collaboration between academia, practice, policymakers, regulators, and professional bodies.

That spirit of collaboration has been at the heart of the Centre for Business Law and Practice for the past thirty years, and we hope it will continue to define our work for the next thirty years as well.

On behalf of the University of Leeds and the Centre for Business Law and Practice, I would like to thank our speakers, our colleagues, our partners at the Insolvency Service, our organisers, and all of you for contributing to such a stimulating and successful event.

The Centre remains committed to working closely with practitioners, policymakers, professional bodies, and fellow academics. We are always keen to develop new partnerships, host visitors, collaborate on events, and create opportunities for meaningful engagement between research and practice.

We look forward to continuing these conversations and to working together to shape the future of insolvency law.

Thank you very much.