**Asset Recovery International: Fraud Litigation, Enforcement & Contentions Insolvency**

Dublin, Ireland: 26-28 February 2020

The Asset Recovery International conference is an annual industry event for practitioners working in the fields of fraud litigation, enforcement and contentious insolvency. The conference is thoroughly international. The majority of sessions are presented by mixed panels with speakers from multiple (and often diverse) jurisdictions, and the delegate body comprises attendees from over 25 countries. While the majority of delegates are lawyers, the conference also attracts a significant number of insolvency practitioners as well as representatives from litigation funders and investigation outfits.

Following an evening of informal welcome drinks, a busy conference programme is packed into two full days. The programme is structured around a handful of plenary sessions. Of great general interest (and some controversy) was the opening keynote speech by Julian Wheatland, the former CFO of Cambridge Analytica, aptly titled: ‘What Happens When Things Go Wrong’.

The remaining plenary sessions covered an array of topics with ample insights to be gained from the distinguished speakers. These sessions covered, *inter alia*, how to deal with troublesome arbitration clauses, bringing directors, shareholders and employees into the firing line, reversing fraudulent transactions across jurisdictions, and developments in the world of Ponzi schemes. The sessions culminated in a comedy quiz show titled ‘Have I Got Fraud News for You’.

The plenary sessions offered a great deal of general interest to the diverse delegate body and served well to lubricated discussions in the many networking activities and coffee breaks.

In between these sessions, the programme was divided into three streams in which more specialist sessions were on offer. These sessions focussed either on a particular industry specialism, such as the use of private investigations, or concerned a regional angle, such as developments in Latin America or Russia and the CIS.

I attended technical sessions on the offensive use of insolvency to ‘beat the fraudsters’ and the use of insolvency tools to break asset protection trusts and structures. The most technically useful session considered the innovative use of interim insolvency remedies in international asset recovery. Indeed, the focus on the intersection of insolvency and fraud litigation was particularly useful and certainly finds its home at this conference.

The quality of the speakers was generally very good, and certain sessions were excellent. In particular, I found the use of worked case studies in the more technical sessions to be especially educational.

I also attended sessions covering the current issues and trends in Russia/CIS litigation, financial services fraud and insolvency law developments in the main offshore jurisdictions. While these topics do not feature in my day-to-day practice, the topical issues discussed can and do arise tangentially and I am pleased that the conference enabled me to keep abreast of these developments.

I undoubtedly learned a lot from the sessions, both technically and in terms of strategies to operate most effectively in aggressively defended litigation. It is sometimes said that practitioners are reluctant to publish their know-how in the areas of civil fraud and asset tracing, for obvious reasons, especially when it comes to sharing strategies engineered with a view to achieving a tactical, as opposed to a strictly legal, advantage. It is incredibly valuable to hear some of the most eminent practitioners in these field sharing their ideas and experiences. The fact that I was then able to continue the discussions with other delegates only made for an even better learning experience.

Finally, I cannot overstate the value of the many networking opportunities.

My practice has certainly benefitted from the opportunity to meet and spend time with fellow delegates, including solicitors who have instructed me in the past, as well as barristers, insolvency practitioners and litigation funders. It was also greatly rewarding to be able to meet a number of people whose names I have seen in email chains, and who I have worked alongside, but who I had not previously met in person.

Modern civil fraud work is by its nature highly international. The conference guarantees, at the very least, a fruitful opportunity to meet exceptional lawyers and professionals working in the field from across a number of jurisdictions, and I heartily recommend it to junior civil fraud practitioners.

My attendance was sponsored by the London Common Law & Commercial Bar Association and the Bar Council Scholarships Trust. I am most grateful to both for their generous support.

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