

**CONTEXT FOR CONSULTATION BY THE
ELECTRONIC EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTS INDUSTRY WORKING GROUP**

1. Thank you for considering responding to the request for public consultation. The Industry Working Group (“IWG”) is a multi-disciplinary group of business, legal and technical experts which, having published its Interim Report on 1 February 2022, seeks views from the widest possible range of interested parties (stakeholders, industry, business users, consumers and members of the public – together, “the consultees”) on one particular subject upon which, within the group, there are a range of views.
2. This subject is that of some means of certification or regulation of those who provide the means to apply electronic signatures (whether this is a platform provider or software company). Certification is one way of providing assurance to businesses and consumers that digital signatures are as good as, if not better than, traditional wet-ink signatures.
3. Such certification could be legally mandated, imposed by a regulatory body, or administered by eSignature platform providers themselves. The last of these options is by far the most efficient, flexible and achievable of these forms, at least in the short to medium term.
4. The attached consultation questions are designed, therefore, to elicit views as to:
 - whether such self-certification is capable of providing an effective level of user confidence in eSignature platforms and, if so,
 - what form it should take, and
 - how it should be administered.
5. Consultees are invited to read the Interim Report, the link to which appears below.
6. The concept of either certification or, if applicable, regulation, is one that could be seen to sit in parallel with the trust framework currently in its beta version (The UK digital identity and attributes trust framework published by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) on 13 June 2022. However, there are both pros and cons to requiring, or offering the opportunity to, participants in and users of electronic signatures a system of certification/registration approved by the Government. Hence this consultation.
7. We would be very grateful for your views. Please see the attached consultation questions and information on how, and by when, to submit your comments. Thank you.

***Mr Justice Fraser
Professor Sarah Green
Industry Working Group***

Link to Interim Report:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1051451/electronic-execution-documents-industry-working-group-interim-report.pdf