



Department for
Business & Trade

Third progress report on the implementation and operation of Parts 1 to 3 of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023

June 2026



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Corporate Transparency Act 2023

June 2026



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Foreword

I am pleased to present this report on the reforms to Companies House. This is the third update since the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (ECCT Act) received Royal Assent, and covers the significant progress made on implementing these reforms over the past 12 months.

Economic crime continues to pose a serious threat to the UK's economic prosperity and national security. It also fuels criminality such as the drugs trade, human trafficking and the financing of terrorism.

Economic crime also hinders growth. Fraud, address hijacking, money laundering and tax evasion impact individuals and legitimate businesses, erode trust and raise costs. This harms the UK's reputation as a safe and transparent place to invest and do business.

The abuse of UK corporate structures, including limited companies, enables all forms of economic crime. Companies House is central to the response: improving the accuracy of the register, removing fraudulent entries, and sharing information with law enforcement partners.

With the reforms resulting from the ECCT Act, this Government has made significant strides in the fight against economic crime. Over the past 12 months, Companies House has deepened its collaboration with the Insolvency Service (INSS) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to support enforcement action against those who abuse the UK's company law framework. This has included a significant contribution to a National Crime Agency-led operation targeting high-street criminality and money laundering.

Companies House has also introduced mandatory identity verification (IDV) for directors and People with Significant Control (PSCs), strengthening transparency and deterring those who use UK corporate structures to facilitate crime.

These reforms are good news for business. The companies register is relied upon every day by consumers, customers, businesses, banks and credit reference agencies to help inform decisions. A more accurate and robust register that is free from fraudulent entries and illegitimate or criminal enterprises will bolster confidence and support the prosperity of the UK economy.

Companies House is delivering the most significant changes to company law in almost two centuries. The organisation now has the tools to support growth, protect businesses and people from harm, and build trust in UK corporate transparency. While there is more to do, this report shows the pace of progress and the impact already being delivered.

Blair McDougall MP

June 2026

The ECCT Act: Drivers and delivery

Companies House's 2026–27 Strategic Intelligence Assessment illustrates the complexity of the challenge in tackling the abuse of corporate structures. It is thought that:

- around 50% of register abuse relates to fraud.
- another 25% relates to illicit finance—including money laundering and sanctions evasion.
- false filing; address misuse; front directors; complicit Authorised Corporate Service Providers (ACSPs); Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) abuse; and use of shell companies, complex or circular ownership structures are common forms of register abuse linked to this offending. (Shell companies are used by criminals to mask illegal activity such as drug supply, modern slavery, duty/excise evasion and environmental crime.)

The ECCT Act is a keystone of the government's response, strengthening law enforcement, regulatory frameworks, and cross-agency cooperation. The Act introduced major reforms to Companies House and INSS, and there is much to accomplish. Significant progress has already been made, as detailed in this and the preceding two progress reports—which can be viewed at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/economic-crime-and-corporate-transparency-act-2023-progress-reports

More than 30 statutory instruments have been made, of an anticipated total of over 50. Mandatory IDV has been introduced; and misleading information is being removed from the register at scale.

Enhanced collaboration between Companies House, INSS, HMRC and other partners is successfully tackling corporate abuse. In tandem, the government is working to minimise the burden placed by these reforms on legitimate businesses through careful phasing, testing, and provision of guidance and support.

1. Structure and scope of this report

The ECCT Act reforms the role of Companies House and improves transparency over UK companies and other legal entities in order to strengthen the business environment and combat economic crime.

The ECCT Act is made up of six Parts. This report is concerned with the implementation of Parts 1 to 3 only, in accordance with the statutory duty to report on progress set out in section 213 (1).

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023: Second Progress Report gave a 2024–2025 update on the implementation of the reforms. **This third report provides an update on progress from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.** Further reports will follow each 12 months to 2030.

Section 2 of this report details progress made in delivering the suite of secondary legislation required to implement the ECCT Act.

Section 3 covers steps taken by Companies House during the past year to improve the quality of information on its registers, as enabled by Part 1 of the ECCT Act (which reforms Companies House processes and furnishes the Registrar with new statutory functions and objectives).

Section 4 discusses progress in relation to Part 2 of the ECCT Act, which reforms the legal frameworks relating to Limited Partnerships.

Section 5 covers work in relation to Part 3 of the ECCT Act, which relates to the Register of Overseas Entities (ROE).

Section 6 provides an update on how Companies House and INSS are working together to tackle economic crime.

Section 7 explores how effective communication of ECCT Act reforms has been essential to joint successes during the reporting period.

Section 8 sets out next steps, including secondary legislation to come. The government will continue to report annually on progress.

(Note: to enable consistency of reporting between the ECCT Act Progress Report and Companies House and INSS Annual Reports and Accounts, this third Progress Report has been aligned with the financial year. The previous Progress Report covered the period 4 March 2024 to 3 March 2025.)

2. Secondary legislation

Since the ECCT Bill received Royal Assent in October 2023, more than 30 statutory instruments have been made to support and empower Companies House to carry out its new functions and duties.

Over this reporting period alone, key pieces of legislation have been made to:

- support the introduction of mandatory IDV for company directors and PSCs and extend IDV requirements to a wider range of legal entities, including LLPs and overseas and unregistered companies, making it harder to conceal identities when setting up or running entities.
- strengthen filing requirements so that incorrect or misleading information can be prevented from appearing on the register or addressed more effectively.
- give the Registrar additional powers and duties to add notes to the companies register and ROE, drawing attention to important status changes or compliance issues.
- enable individuals to protect a wider range of personal information from public disclosure, including days of date of birth, signatures, business occupations, and residential addresses in most cases where they appear on the public register.

Taken together, these measures improve the quality, transparency and usability of the public register while safeguarding personal information. The benefit beyond tackling crime is a register that can be trusted as the gold standard for business decision-making and access to credit. The data it holds is already valued at £1–3 billion annually (2019 prices); taking action to increase confidence in registered entities, their officers and their filings will support growth and bring even more value to the economy.

Further measures introduced between April 2025 and March 2026 include simplifying filing requirements for Community Interest Companies; supporting the removal of the company requirement to maintain separate local statutory registers of directors, secretaries and PSCs; and setting fees at the right level to ensure that statutory functions and service delivery are sustainably funded.

In the next reporting period, new secondary legislation is expected to progress limited partnership (LP) reform, support the transparency of the ROE, and support the introduction of requirements that parties delivering information to Companies House have their identity verified.

Details on the instruments that came into force in this reporting period can be found at Annex 1.



3. ECCT Act Part 1: Companies House reform

- **Major reform requires all company directors and PSCs to verify their identity** (mandatory from 18 November 2025). Will help cleanse information on register, deterring criminals
- **New service introduced for registration of ACSPs**—a key enabler for implementation of IDV
- **New protections for customers' information** in effect

Companies House has continued to implement the powers provided by the ECCT Act to improve transparency around UK companies. New IDV requirements and an ACSP registration regime are helping protect the integrity of the register and support business in the UK.

Utilising the new requirement for companies to provide a Registered Email Address (REA), Companies House is also enhancing and efficiently delivering communication. The REA is now used to contact companies in relation to specific filings and as a tool to increase their compliance with obligations.

Companies House continues to deliver on its monitoring and evaluation commitments to assess the value of the ECCT Act reforms. In a February 2026 survey, businesses either agreed or strongly agreed that the reforms will make it easier to trust Companies House data (86%) and help to reduce fraud (84%). (Delivered for Companies House, the inaugural edition of this twice-yearly Perception Survey sampled businesses and the general public: to establish baseline knowledge of and sentiment towards Companies House and the data it holds; and to understand whether the reforms enacted by legislation have created change in the expected way.)

Identity verification

Robust identity checks are essential to prevent fraud and the misuse of registered companies.

IDV became mandatory on 18 November 2025 for all new company directors and PSCs, with all existing officers due to verify at a specific point within a 12-month period, predominantly aligned to the due date for an existing annual filing.

In order to minimise administrative burden and support those with multiple appointments, the IDV process comprises two parts. Initially, an individual is required to complete an identity verification check, either using the services offered directly by Companies House or via an ACSP. Following this identity check, the individual receives a unique personal code.

Individuals can then use their personal code to link their identity to their various appointments. Companies must confirm that their directors have passed the identity check upon submitting their next confirmation statement. Verified status is published on the register, with plans to highlight unverified appointments in future.

As of 31 March 2026, Companies House has issued 3.81 million personal codes, and expects to verify 6–7 million individuals by November 2026. So far, these have been linked to 3.74 million appointments.

Customer experience and support

IDV was designed to be straightforward, minimising the burden on business. The aforementioned survey showed that 94% of those who had completed the initial identity check found instructions clear, and 90% found the process easy. As of 31 March 2026 the customer complaint ratio is exceptionally low, around 1 per 5,000 people verified.

An April–November 2025 voluntary period helped Companies House and ACSPs manage the burden of change for their customers. This period saw high take-up and a strong start to the transition year, with more than one million people completing the verification check to obtain their personal code.

It also allowed services to be tested, with Companies House drawing on casework insights and contact trends to refine guidance, user journeys, communications and internal processes. The Customer Support Plus team provides personalised, empathetic assistance to those who have more complex needs, with dedicated case officers offering one-to-one guidance. Close working with charities, key workers and those with lasting POA has ensured that people who require help receive it at the right time. Strengthened relationships with government partners and stakeholders will facilitate remaining ECCT Act implementation.

Pursuing compliance

Companies House has published its 'reasonable, proportionate and evidence based' framework approach to driving customer compliance with IDV requirements. This begins with informing customers about the legal requirements and using a range of communication channels to guide and support those who need it. Nudge emails are used before key deadlines to prompt companies to comply on time, and provide opportunities to make representations (tell Companies House about exceptional circumstances) if they fail to do so.

Companies House will pursue non-compliance cases where companies fail to complete IDV requirements within reasonable timeframes, using a range of powers available, including financial penalties, prosecution and referral to other agencies. Companies House will share intelligence and work with other government agencies and law enforcement partners where there is evidence of aggravated, fraudulent or criminal activity.

Early outcomes

Since IDV mandation went live on 18 November 2025, all companies have due dates by which to provide their verification statements for each of their active directors. So far, two million email nudges have been sent to companies to prompt compliance in advance of their deadlines, and more than three quarters of a million default letters have been sent. Casework has commenced which could lead to court cases and financial penalties, and Companies House has also started referring some cases to INSS.

Companies House has observed a shift in customer activity around the time of mandatory IDV introduction on 18 November 2025, suggesting that IDV has prompted individuals to review or update their company details:

- accepted director changes spiked to 18,500 the week before (a 68% increase on the same time in 2024).
- accepted PSC changes spiked to 15,300 the week before (a 62% increase on the same time in 2024); and to 18,200 in the fortnight following (a 96% increase on the same time in 2024).
- there were 139,000 applications to strike off a company from 18 November 2025 to 31 March 2026 (a 24% increase on the same period in 2024–25).

Authorised Corporate Service Providers

On 18 March 2025, Companies House introduced a new service for the registration of ACSPs, ensuring that organisations providing services to corporate entities are UK based and overseen by an anti-money laundering (AML) supervisory body within the UK.

Many of these organisations provide a third-party route to identity verification for their customers, so are a key enabler of its success; as of 31 March 2026, ACSPs have verified 783,000 individuals. In future, ACSPs will also be the route to document filing for LPs, and restrictions will require that third parties filing on behalf of a firm be ACSPs to prevent unsupervised company service providers from filing.

Companies House has the power to cease or suspend ACSPs that do not meet the obligations required of them. Supporting transparency, a list of these ceased and suspended ACSPs is frequently updated on the GOV.UK website (as of 31 March 2026, 56 and 74 respectively).

Protection of information on the register

Following regulations which came into force in January and July 2025, individuals can now apply to protect from the public register their day of date of birth, signature, business occupation and residential address in most cases. This means that the relevant information is no longer available for public inspection.

These provisions are additional to pre-existing protection measures for directors, LLP members and PSCs.

4. ECCT Act Part 2: Limited Partnership reform

The law governing LPs has not kept up with the regulatory framework that applies to companies and LLPs. Under measures and powers introduced by the ECCT Act, LPs will be required to submit more information, providing greater transparency for users of the register.

When the measures come into force, LPs must:

- provide more information about partners, including name, date of birth and service address for individuals;
- provide a registered office within the part of the UK in which they are registered;
- provide a registered email address;
- confirm that the LP is formed for a lawful purpose; and
- file an annual confirmation statement.

These wider reforms to LPs are linked to and dependent on delivery of other aspects of ECCT Act reforms. This is a complex area requiring secondary legislation, detailed guidance and development of Companies House systems to ensure that legitimate users (pension funds, venture etc.) can continue to operate.

In the past year, significant stakeholder engagement has been undertaken to understand the needs of users and ensure they are covered by upcoming provisions and services. Stakeholders from England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have been represented to ensure that the nuances of the differing legislation are considered in ongoing work.

5. ECCT Act Part 3: Register of Overseas Entities

- **Implemented ROE Trust Disclosure Service**—enabling public scrutiny of trust information held on register (See Section 2: Secondary Legislation)
- **Significantly strengthened capabilities**; and continuing to **enhance operational effectiveness**. (Enables more targeted and proportionate enforcement activity. Continuing to monitor effectiveness of enforcement regime)
- Strengthening approach through **enhanced cross-government cooperation and improved international working**. (Will support more effective action against non-compliance)

The ROE is a public register which went live on 1 August 2022 as part of the government's urgent response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which prompted fast-tracked legislation by Parliament and rapid implementation by Companies House. It is intended to combat money laundering by increasing transparency in the UK property market.

Overseas entities that own or wish to own UK land are now required to submit information about their beneficial owners to Companies House.

This requirement also applies to overseas entities which bought property or land on or after 1 January 1999 in England and Wales; 8 December 2014 in Scotland; and 5 September 2022 in Northern Ireland. Overseas entities in scope had until 31 January 2023 to apply for registration.

Initial impact and success

33,100 overseas entities have registered as of 31 March 2026, reducing the threat posed by foreign ownership of UK land. The remaining, non-compliant entities can no longer easily sell, lease or raise finance over their property, and this remains the case until they comply.

As of 31 March 2026, the ROE has been searched more than four million times. (**Note:** Companies House analytics software only tracks visits to online services where the user has agreed to cookies—meaning that the true number of ROE searches may be significantly higher.)

Disclosure of trust information

While the ROE is a public register, trust information, other than the name of the trustee, is not published on the register. This information, however, can be disclosed to law enforcement and HMRC.

The ROE Trust Disclosure Service was launched on 31 August 2025 to enable public scrutiny of the unpublished trust information held on the register. Individuals have since been able to apply to Companies House for access to this information, provided they meet the application requirements.

Further regulations will be introduced in 2026 to improve this service.

ROE enforcement

Annotating the register

Using new powers and duties introduced in June 2025, Companies House has begun adding a note to the ROE where it has reasonable belief that an overseas entity has been dissolved, wound up or has otherwise ceased to exist in its home jurisdiction. As of 31 March 2026, 339 of these annotations have been applied to the register, providing greater transparency and clarity for users.

Financial penalties

With strengthened enforcement capabilities provided by the ECCT Act—including new powers to impose financial penalties—Companies House has been improving the effectiveness of its enforcement regime by refining the end-to-end penalties process.

This includes verifying overseas entities' trading status and service addresses through international registry checks; enhancing legal robustness around notice content and service; moving to tracked international delivery; and introducing dedicated case-management tools and operational guidance. Enhanced cross-government cooperation and international engagement continue to improve the quality of source data, supporting more targeted and proportionate action against non-compliance.

Companies House will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this strengthened enforcement approach. Addressing unpaid penalties for non-compliance with ROE requirements, and issuing additional penalties where necessary, remains a priority.

Additional enforcement measures

Where compliance with regulatory requirements cannot be secured, Companies House may seek to enforce the debt through the courts. This may result in a charge being placed on the entity's property.

It remains the case that non-compliant entities cannot buy or sell UK property until they are compliant with the ROE requirements. This is a strong deterrent against non-compliance.

Numbers at a glance (as of 31 March 2026)

Registrations

- **33,140** overseas entities registered on ROE
- **2,885** entities removed following registration of a removal notice

For failing to register on the ROE

- **5,290** penalty warning notices issued;
- **445** penalty notices issued (worth £23 million);
- of which, **144** have been reversed, waived or written off where necessary

For failing to update on the ROE

- **3,670** penalty warning notices issued;
- **111** penalty notices issued (worth **£555,000**);
- of which, **16** have been reversed, waived or written off where necessary

Corporate annotations

- **339** annotations applied where an overseas entity is Dissolved, Wound Up or Otherwise Ceased to Exist in its home jurisdiction

Request for trust information

- **27** applications,
- **8** of which were approved

(Note: Penalties are waived following successful appeals and representations. Penalties reversed should not have been issued, eg. due to entity being out of scope. Penalties written off have been issued correctly, but entities have subsequently registered, dissolved etc.)

6. Tackling economic crime and enforcement

- **Cross-government response set up between HMRC, Companies House and INSS on corporate abuse** (addressing company registrations and de-registrations, accounting and filing integrity)
- **Committed three-way partnership in operation between Companies House, HMRC and INSS to tackle abusive phoenixism**
- **Targeted contact cycles and penalty issuing** tackling abuse of dormancy, confirmation statement non-compliance and REA inaccuracies, with outcomes from compliance to companies entering strike-off pathway

Acting on misleading information and non-compliance

As a trusted information source, the register is an indispensable tool for both business and individual members of the public. A transparent, accountable business environment is essential for legitimate companies to thrive. This is why the reforms introduced by the ECCT Act—already beginning to improve the integrity of the register—are so important.

The abuse of UK corporate structures via fraudulent and misleading information enables all forms of economic crime. It is thought that a combined 75% of register abuse relates to fraud and illicit finance—including money laundering and sanctions evasion—while basic non-compliance with statutory requirements can be considered a prerequisite for more serious activity (Companies House Strategic Intelligence Assessment 2026).

Address misuse in particular—the registration of companies to an inappropriate address—not only facilitates other crime types but is also associated with financial harm to individuals (including damaged credit ratings and accountability for debts run up against hijacked addresses). Often employed by criminals overseas to gain a UK footprint for tax avoidance, VAT fraud or money laundering, this form of register misuse is a focus of Companies House compliance and enforcement activity.

Supported by developing tech capabilities, Companies House has taken a range of actions to cleanse the register. In the year to 31 March 2026, the organisation exercised its statutory powers, introduced under the ECCT Act, to address compliance issues involving approximately 158,000 companies. Activities included:

Tackling abuse of dormancy on the register

Dormant status can be abused to mask activity linked to economic crime. Targeted action trialled the effectiveness of the section 1092A Companies Act 2006 power in the dormancy context. This power allows the Registrar to compel a company to respond to a formal query; the response (or lack of it) may result in correction or annotation of company information, prosecution or strike-off.

Removing misleading information from the register

As of 31 March 2026, Companies House has:

- **removed 119,000 officer addresses** and **95,200 PSC** addresses from the register.
- **redacted 77,900 incorporation documents** to remove personal data used without consent.
- **removed 22,900 documents** from the register.

Enforcing consequences for information misuse and negligence

- Companies House now has the power to remove misused Registered Office Addresses (ROAs) from the register; the company address is then defaulted to that of Companies House; and unless the ROA is rectified, the company is subsequently struck off. As of 31 March 2026, **151,000** ROAs have been removed from the register as part of tackling address misuse.
- In the past year, **920** companies entered the pathway to expedited strike-off (the process by which a company can be removed from the register and dissolved, where Companies House is satisfied it has been registered on a false basis).
- With regard to companies that failed to submit required IDV statements alongside their confirmation statement, Companies House is now taking action including progression towards prosecution, referrals to INSS, and the issuance of financial penalties.
(See Section 3: Identity Verification)

Issuing financial penalties

Pilot penalty issuing began in February 2025 and focused for maximum impact on serially non-compliant companies that failed to file an annual confirmation statement.

Between February 2025 and 18 November 2025, 1,354 penalty warnings were issued to companies (with 66% subsequently receiving a penalty notice). In the next reporting period, Companies House will refine and review the penalties pilot with a view to obtaining clear insight into the effectiveness of penalties in enforcing compliance.

Annotating the register

With its new annotation powers and duties, Companies House can add information to the public register—flagging issues like non-compliance with information requests or where action has been taken to strike off a company registered on a false basis. As well as supporting legal enforcement activities, these annotations improve transparency and leave fewer places for fraudsters to hide.

Annotation is currently being applied in a proportionate, trialled way with a view to learning from its use and incrementally broadening its application. The scope of annotation is being widened on a case-by-case basis where it enhances transparency.

As of 31 March 2026, annotations have been applied to 1,060 companies: for expedited strike-off; individuals subject to director disqualification sanctions; and failure to respond to a section 1092A query from Companies House.

Using communications campaigns to support compliance

60,000 individual communications prompted customers to update their REA. An accurate REA ensures that companies can be reached quickly when action is needed, and makes it harder for them to avoid scrutiny.

Collaboration between Companies House, HMRC and INSS

Enabled by the ECCT Act, Companies House, INSS and HMRC are now operating collectively across intelligence gathering, risk profiling and early intervention: with Companies House expanding its intelligence capability, HMRC redeploying tax-led controls and INSS broadening its enforcement remit.

Supported by new powers introduced through the ECCT Act, this collective work will focus on:

- robust identity verification;
- monitoring and standardisation of company filing;
- intelligence sharing and pattern spotting;
- systematic removal of non-compliant entities from the register; and
- eliminating abusive phoenixism (where directors liquidate companies to avoid liabilities whilst continuing business through new entities).

Companies House and INSS have a long-established partnership rooted in shared responsibility for enforcing the Companies Act 2006 and related legislation. This relationship was materially strengthened by the ECCT Act, which created a clear expectation of closer joint working to tackle economic crime. INSS hosts the Secretary of State's function that enforces Companies Act offences and holds the wider powers to take companies and individuals out of the market in the public interest, supported by deep investigation skillsets.

The two agencies are now in the process of establishing a systematic, threat-based, intelligence-led system for assessing new cases for investigation, supported by INSS's Investigation and Enforcement Strategy (which can be viewed at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/insolvency-service-launches-5-year-investigation-and-enforcement-strategy).

This new shared approach is built around Strategic Intelligence Assessments and control strategies, representing a shift away from insolvency-triggered or complaint-led case selection and allowing the highest risks to the integrity of the companies register to be identified and prioritised.

Structural improvements to information sharing mean that intelligence can now be exchanged more quickly and securely, enabling suspicious activity patterns and linked corporate networks to be identified through analysis of data on directors, addresses and filings. Developments include shared intelligence products, and closer collaboration through dedicated teams, joint tasking and coordination forums.

Together, these arrangements support a more coherent journey from information exchange to enforcement. Where intelligence indicates misuse of corporate structures, INSS can act on timely referrals from Companies House, applying appropriate civil and criminal powers including public interest winding-up, director disqualification, prosecution or recovery action under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

During the 1 April 2025–31 March 2026 reporting period, Companies House has shared intelligence and made referrals to INSS on 231 cases, of which 169 were made to the new INSS Intelligence Cell. Referrals resulted in the commencement of 19 investigations into illicit company activities. Five 'live' companies referred by CH have been wound up in the public interest.

Case studies

'Business factory' wound up in the public interest following INSS investigations

Three interconnected companies—Yunma Tianlong International Consulting Co. Ltd, Busy Secretary Service Ltd, and J&C Business (UK) Co., Ltd—were shut down by the High Court following an INSS investigation.

These firms supported the registration of more than **11,000 UK companies for overseas clients** (mainly China based) while operating outside legal requirements for Trust and Company Service Providers. They failed to register with HMRC, conducted no anti-money laundering checks, and created the false impression that their clients operated genuine UK businesses.

Investigators found:

- Thousands of companies had no real UK presence, with many registered to a single address where mail piled up.
- Some client companies were already wound up for misleading consumers.
- More than half of their registered companies have faced Companies House enforcement action, with further investigations ongoing.
- The firms filed dormant accounts, despite indications of trading, and did not fully cooperate with investigators.

This investigation was part of Operation Hammerhead: **a wider crackdown to prevent misuse of UK corporate structures that was led by the National Crime Agency, enabled by the ECCT Act, and initiated thanks to intelligence work by INSS.**

This is one example of a range of multi-agency activities targeting high-risk incorporation locations and corporate entities believed to be enabling criminality in the UK and overseas. As Companies House works more closely with partners across the anti-economic crime ecosystem, the level of crime disruption continues to accelerate.

Companies shut down after false claims of hundreds of millions in turnover and profits

Five companies—Automarket Europe Ltd, Integra Group Ltd, Maxell Ltd, Montana & Montana Ltd, and Supermarket Plus Ltd—have been shut down by the High Court after **filing false and in some cases forged accounts claiming turnovers of up to £642 million**, despite having no genuine business activity.

The companies:

- shared South London and Croydon office addresses and common directors/shareholders.
- filed accounts with wildly inflated profits and assets, inconsistent financial statements, and poor-quality documentation.
- falsely named reputable accountants and solicitors as auditors without their knowledge.
- failed to co-operate with INSS investigators or provide legitimate accounting records.

INSS launched the investigation following referrals from Companies House, using its strengthened powers under the ECCT Act. Several accounts have since been removed from the register after being deemed ‘factually inaccurate and forged’.

These actions helped prevent businesses from being misled by fabricated financial information and protect the integrity of the Companies House register.

Millions in criminal proceeds seized through massive cross-agency operation

The National Crime Agency estimates that at least £12 billion of criminal cash is generated in the UK each year. As well as laundering the proceeds of crime, high street businesses like barbers, vape shops and mini marts are often used to sell illicit products, evade tax, and facilitate other types of criminality such as drug supply.

Operation Machinize 2, led by the National Crime Agency and conducted in cooperation with the National Police Chiefs’ Council, was the UK’s largest ever money laundering crackdown focusing on high-street businesses of this kind.

Running through October 2025, Machinize 2 involved every UK police force and Regional Organised Crime Unit, Home Office Immigration Enforcement, Trading Standards, HMRC and Companies House. The partnership delivered:

- **2,734 premises visited and raided.**
- **924 individuals arrested.**
- **over £10.7 million of suspected criminal proceeds seized.**
- **over £2.7 million worth of illicit commodities destroyed.**

The growth of its own Intelligence Hub enabled Companies House to support this national

operation. With enhanced intelligence capabilities and **its powers introduced under the ECCT Act, Companies House could trace and identify data associated with illicit companies, then pinpoint specific areas in which action could be taken.**

INSS is now preparing to receive referrals on a significant number of suspect companies, relayed from the National Crime Agency to Companies House following the operation.

Significant criminal assets identified by Europol-led taskforce

Freezing and confiscating the tools and proceeds of crime are key to combatting cross-border criminals. In January 2025, financial experts from all over the world joined forces at Europol's headquarters to increase the number of criminal assets seized globally.

Europol hosted the second session of the Asset Search & Seize Enforcement Taskforce in October, with a strong focus on crypto assets. Participants pooled their knowledge to identify and trace assets linked to criminal activities, explore emerging money laundering techniques, and plan coordinated actions.

This initiative was supported by Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre, EU Internet Referral Unit, European Cybercrime Centre and Innovation Lab, as well as Interpol's Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre, Eurojust, and leading private companies from the cryptocurrency and financial sectors. The information exchanged significantly boosted investigations into cases, with total damages exceeding EUR 1 billion.

Results included the identification of:

- **249 cryptocurrency addresses, wallets and accounts (total value EUR 12.1 million).**
- **74 bank accounts (with 1 bank account blocked).**
- **2 real estate properties (combined value EUR 3 million).**
- **6 luxury vehicles (seized).**
- **40 companies.**

Partnering with the National Crime Agency in this multi-agency operation, **Companies House used its ECCT Act powers and capabilities to interrogate and share data on addresses and other variables**, providing beneficial information to advance the breadth and scale of investigations.



7. Informing customers and stakeholders

- **Increasing awareness of ECCT Act**

Awareness of changes to UK company law increased, coinciding with ongoing Companies House communications campaign: from 40.5% in March 2025 to 77% reporting some level of awareness in early 2026, according to a YouGov Business Omnibus survey (82% among finance and accounting professionals; 84% among legal professionals)

- **More than one million identity verifications achieved ahead of legal IDV mandation**

Voluntary IDV figures driven from around 15,000 (June 2025) to more than one million (November 2025) by targeted campaigns. Significant increases in verifications generated by email campaigns. Positive message of simple, secure, trusted IDV system reinforced by news story on GOV.UK and strong media coverage

- **Strong relationships with stakeholders and partner organisations developed through collaborative working and communication**

Has helped identify where Companies House can support customers. Established stakeholder networks proven as sustainable, low-cost, trusted ecosystem that amplifies messaging beyond direct government channels

(Note: Fieldwork for the most recent Yougov Business Omnibus survey was undertaken between 26 January and 2 February 2026; total sample size was 1,016 senior decision makers. The 2025 survey asked whether respondents had heard about these changes to UK company law. The 2026 survey asked whether they either knew a lot about these changes, knew the main points, had heard about them but didn't know much about them, or had not heard anything about them before that day.)

Over the past 12 months, Companies House has delivered a sustained, multi-channel campaign to prepare and support businesses, intermediaries and stakeholders through the continued implementation of the ECCT Act. From driving awareness of new legal requirements to communicating the rollout of IDV, strategic communications measurably enabled compliance and demonstrated the role of Companies House in supporting business. Between 4 March 2025 and 31 March 2026:

- the Changes to UK company law website (www.changestoukcompanylaw.campaign.gov.uk) has remained the central hub for customers and stakeholders, reaching more than 925,000 pageviews. An authoritative source of truth during a complex period of change, with an IDV support page published in November 2025, the site helps businesses and individuals understand exactly what is required of them.
- Companies House published more than 150 new and updated pages on GOV.UK, including news stories, press releases, guidance pages and updated forms to reflect new requirements.
- a coordinated media campaign (with a technical media briefing) built public confidence and raised awareness ahead of mandatory IDV. The press release achieved more than 7,000 pageviews and secured 55+ pieces of coverage, including BBC Radio 4's You & Yours and Today programmes, the Daily Express and City AM.
- 30 million emails were sent to REAs. Although mainly focused on IDV, they also included personalised confirmation statement filing reminders. These will continue throughout the transition year to ensure companies and LLPs are informed of their obligations and have the right guidance to act.
- 24 email newsletters were sent to 529,657 subscribers. This included an ACSP-focused campaign to 5,000 subscribers which achieved a significantly above-average open (55%) and click (52%) rate, helping to inform future segmentation strategy.
- 280 paid and organic posts were published on Facebook and LinkedIn about ECCT Act requirements, and seen nearly 6 million times. Seven YouTube Shorts were published on IDV, generating nearly 30,000 views, with a long-form Understanding Identity Verification video exceeding 200,000 views. A consistent social media presence kept ECCT Act requirements visible and accessible to those who may not actively seek out official guidance.
- ten blog posts related to the ECCT Act, receiving 40,309 pageviews. Focusing on economic crime and IDV, these translated complex change into real-world context—including INSS' role, activity to tackle company cloning, and business benefits of IDV.



- paid advertising and advertorials ran in trade press to target regions and lower-awareness audiences (including SMEs, retail and flat management companies). From May 2025 to March 2026, trade press content delivered 3.4 million views and 31,000+ clicks to IDV service and guidance pages. Retail estate sector awareness increased by 25% (against a 6% overall increase), with regional awareness rising by 24% in the East, 23% in the Midlands and 18% in Wales.
- a campaign informed customers about fee changes taking effect on 1 February 2026. It emphasised how new and enhanced powers introduced under the ECCT Act, funded by fees, are helping Companies House build a more trustworthy environment for legitimate businesses.

(Note: Google Analytics only provides data for users who have consented to cookies that measure website use. Actual pageview figures will be higher than those given in the above communications summary.)

Stakeholder engagement

In October 2025, Companies House delivered its annual programme of in-person, invitation-only stakeholder events in London, Belfast and Edinburgh, attended by 92 senior stakeholders representing organisations across all sectors. A virtual Software Providers Forum was attended by a further 131 participants. Companies House also held 54 industry-themed stakeholder forums and bilateral meetings to share updates and gain insights around sector readiness; while 14 stakeholder newsletters, issued to 723 recipients, included key updates on topics including IDV and changes to fees.

Senior Companies House and DBT representatives spoke at around 60 stakeholder gatherings, including webinars, user group events and three major finance and accounting industry events. These opportunities ensured that those with influence and strong links to business heard accurate information first-hand, enabling them to share with confidence.

8. Next steps

Legislation

DBT and Companies House will continue to work together to make the secondary legislation required to implement the relevant ECCT Act provisions.

Implementation

By the next reporting period:

- legislation should be in place to commence LP reform, continuing to improve transparency for users of the register.
- the transition period will be completed for all individuals on the register required to verify their identity, supported by ongoing compliance activity against those who have failed to do so.
- Companies House, HMRC and INSS will continue evolving their cross-government, systematic, intelligence-led response to fraudulent company registrations and corporate abuse.

Timelines are dependent on suitable Parliamentary time in both Houses and will be kept under review. Updates to the implementation timetable will be made available online:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-and-corporate-transparency-act-outline-transition-plan-for-companies-house

Reporting

Official statistics on Companies register activities from April 2025 to March 2026 will be released in June 2026, providing information about incorporations, removals, insolvencies and liquidations, and other corporate body types. These statistics show the annual changes to the register as the implementation of the ECCT Act progresses.

The fourth report to Parliament on the progress of the implementation and operation of Parts 1 to 3 of the ECCT Act will be published within 12 months of the laying date of this third report.

The duty to prepare and lay reports under section 213 (1) of the ECCT Act ceases with the laying of the first report on or after 1 January 2030.

Further information on the performance and expenditure of the Department for Business and Trade, Companies House and INSS is published in their Annual Reports and Accounts.

Annex 1

Statutory instruments made under powers within, or introduced by, the ECCT Act, as of March 2026:

From January 2025

The Companies and Limited Liability Partnerships (Annotation) Regulations 2025

Enable the Registrar to annotate the register to show where a person is subject to disqualified director sanctions, where a person has not complied with a section 1092A notice, and where the Registrar has taken steps towards expedited strike off. Require the Registrar to annotate where information is protected about a Person with Significant Control. Also apply these powers and duty to limited liability partnerships.

The Register of Overseas Entities (Annotation) Regulations 2025

Extend the Registrar's powers to annotate the ROE to reflect dissolution or noncompliance, and where a verifying agent is not appropriately supervised.

From July 2025

The Protection and Disclosure of Personal Information (Amendment) Regulations 2025

Further extend the circumstances in which individuals can protect personal information from the public register.

From November 2025

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (Commencement No. 6 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2025

Commence ECCT Act provisions which introduce mandatory IDV for directors and People with Significant Control; and remove the requirement for companies to maintain local statutory registers of company directors, secretaries and People with Significant Control.

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (Consequential, Incidental and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2025

Make consequential and miscellaneous provisions, including requirements relating to Authorised Corporate Service Providers, unique identifiers for verified individuals, and suppression of IDV statements.

The Companies Authorised to Register, Unregistered Companies and Overseas Companies (Application of Company Law) Regulations 2025

Apply IDV and other company law reforms to overseas companies, companies authorised to register, and unregistered companies.

The Limited Liability Partnerships (Application and Modification of Company Law) Regulations 2025

Apply company law reforms introduced by the ECCT Act to limited liability partnerships.

The Register of People with Significant Control (Amendment) Regulations 2025

Make some technical amendments to notification requirements relating to People with Significant Control in the Companies Act 2006 and the Register of People with Significant Control Regulations 2016; and create some additional notification requirements relating to People with Significant Control.

The Companies and Limited Liability Partnerships (Annotations, Application and Modification of Company Law and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2025

Introduce a duty for the Registrar to annotate the register to display where identity verification checks have been completed for an individual.

From January 2026

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (Commencement No. 7) Regulations 2026

Commence ECCT Act provisions which remove the option for companies to hold information about their members on the central register.

From February 2026

The Registrar of Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2025

Adjust Companies House fees to reflect efficiencies and ensure statutory functions, including IDV, are adequately funded.

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