



**From the Chief Executive**

The Rt Hon Baroness Stowell of Beeston MBE  
Chair, Communications and Digital Committee  
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Dear Baroness Stowell

[www.sra.org.uk](http://www.sra.org.uk)

**Response to your letter dated 12 July 2023 concerning the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill.**

Thank you for your recent letter in relation to the amendments to the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill (EC&CTB).

We welcome the amendments that have been made. The statutory definition of SLAPPs relating to economic crime will in particular be helpful to us.

We share your concern that many SLAPP cases succeed by intimidating victims into ceasing their activities at an early stage and so cases rarely make it to court. The SRA is able to investigate potential SLAPPs or abusive litigation regardless of whether a matter proceeds to court. However, it can be challenging to demonstrate that a case is “without merit” and it is helpful to have a clear test that the courts can apply at an early stage in proceedings.

As you know there are some limitations to the new provisions, in terms of the scope of the fining powers (in that they attach to a subset of SLAPP cases) and the fact that these are not retrospective in effect. However, we are committed to doing everything we can within the legal framework to tackle SLAPPs.

This month, we have begun undertaking a further thematic review in this area, following on from our [Conduct in disputes thematic review](#) which we completed earlier this year. Our latest thematic review will:

- specifically check compliance with our warning notice on SLAPPs (which was issued after our visits to firms for the Conduct in Disputes report took place)
- assess competence in this area and whether firms have, since publication of the Conduct in Dispute report, provided training on SLAPPs
- revisit firms including some from the Conduct in Disputes review
- examine the steps taken by firms to prevent the possible illegitimate funding of SLAPP cases
- examine the relationships between law firms, 'reputation managers', PR companies and private investigators

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Sensitivity: General

- focus on issues and themes arising from our open investigations into concerns around SLAPPs.

We expect to complete our review by the end of the year. We are likely to publish our findings in early 2024, but we are happy to discuss them with you on a confidential basis before then.

Alongside our thematic review, we continue to work with organisations supporting potential victims of SLAPPs to understand emerging issues and encourage reporting to us. We are reviewing our warning notice and conduct in disputes guidance to offer further clarity following feedback from stakeholders. We are proactive in requesting information whenever we receive intelligence of a possible SLAPP, for example through a parliamentary debate, and many of our open investigations have been a result of this proactivity.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Philip', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Paul Philip**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Solicitors Regulation Authority**