

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO
THE BANK INSOLVENCY (NO. 2) RULES (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2009

SR 2009 No. 122

1. This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (as the Department with lead responsibility for insolvency matters in Northern Ireland) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice (Northern Ireland Court Service) and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

This memorandum contains information for the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

2. **Purpose of the instrument**

- 2.1 This instrument revokes and replaces the Bank Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009, S.R. 2009 No.64 solely to correct drafting errors in the instrument.

- 2.2 The instrument introduces rules for the bank insolvency procedure set out in Part 2 of the Banking Act 2009 (“the Act”).

3. **Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments**

- 3.1 Because of the unique circumstances surrounding the instrument (set out below), it has not in this case been possible to comply with the 21-day rule and the instrument will commence on 1 April 2009.

- 3.2 The Act replaces the powers to resolve failing banks conferred by the Banking (Special Provisions) Act 2008. The operative provisions of that Act cease to be exercisable on 21 February 2009. Given the current financial instability, it is vital that powers to resolve failing banks and certain other financial institutions continue to be available and that there is no period of time where such powers cannot be exercised effectively.

- 3.3 The Banking Act 2009 received Royal Assent on 12 February 2009. It is necessary for this statutory instrument to be in operation as soon as possible after 21 February (when the enabling power to make the rules comes into force) to enable Part 2 of the Act to be exercised in an effective manner, if required.

- 3.4 S.R.2009 No. 64 came into operation on 25th February 2009 and this instrument has been made as soon as possible thereafter to correct a number of drafting errors.

4. Legislative Context

- 4.1 The instrument is the first use of the powers of the Lord Chancellor under Article 359 of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 as amended by section 125 of the Act to make rules with the concurrence of Her Majesty's Treasury and the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland to give effect to the bank insolvency procedure.
- 4.2 Part 2 of the Act provides for a modified insolvency procedure for "banks" as defined in section 91 of that Act, which may be used as an alternative to the corporate insolvency procedures set out in the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.
- 4.3 The bank insolvency procedure is based, with modifications where required, on the provisions for winding up companies set out in Part 5 of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.
- 4.4 These rules give effect to that procedure and are based, with necessary modifications, on the rules set out in Part 4 of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991; with rules in the Introductory Provisions and Parts 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 applied in relation to court procedure and practice, dividend payments, and miscellaneous and general provisions. These rules follow the order of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991.

5. Territorial Extent and Application

- 5.1 This instrument applies to Northern Ireland.
- 5.2 The instrument broadly replicates an instrument made for application in England and Wales.

6. European Convention on Human Rights

- 6.1 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

7. Policy background

- 7.1 Part 2 of the Act introduces a new insolvency procedure for banks as defined in section 91 of that Act. The procedure is based on the process of compulsory liquidation set out in Part V of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.
- 7.2 These rules will allow the bank insolvency procedure to work in practice in a similar way to which the rules in Part 4 of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991 give effect to the process of liquidation.
- 7.3 Many of the existing rules for the process of liquidation have been applied to the bank insolvency procedure with little or no modification; although because the process has certain unique features, particularly in the way that it is commenced, the role of the bank liquidator, and as a result of the specific

objectives set out in section 99, new rules and changes have been introduced where required.

- 7.4 The principal policy aims of the bank insolvency procedure are to ensure that where a bank fails, insolvency proceedings can be commenced quickly, and the interests of depositors entitled to payments from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (“FSCS”) are protected. To facilitate this, the process can only be commenced by the court on an application by the Bank of England, the Financial Services Authority (“FSA”) or the Secretary of State; only an insolvency practitioner can be appointed as bank liquidator and he or she will have unique statutory objectives.
- 7.5 In order to prevent a bank ‘run’ and to preserve the assets of a bank, the rules modify the process of applying for an insolvency order so that a court hearing can be held promptly.
- 7.6 In keeping with other special insolvency regimes, only a duly qualified insolvency practitioner (nominated by the applicant) may be appointed as bank liquidator since it is considered that only he or she will have the necessary skills and experience to wind up the affairs of a failed bank in the best interests of creditors.
- 7.7 The first objective of the procedure is for the bank liquidator to work with the FSCS to ensure that either the accounts of eligible depositors are transferred to another financial institution quickly or that prompt compensation payouts are made by the FSCS. To assist in achieving this, the Bank of England, the FSA and the FSCS must form an initial liquidation committee that will work with and oversee the bank liquidator.
- 7.8 Once the first objective has been achieved, it will be left to creditors to decide whether to continue with a liquidation committee and the winding up will continue in much the same way as an ordinary liquidation with the bank liquidator seeking to achieve the best result for its creditors.
- 7.9 Many of the new and amended rules for the bank insolvency procedure reflect the changes outlined above, in addition the rules provide for some amendments to the calculation of set-off in respect of the claims of eligible depositors only, although any changes will not come into effect until such time as the FSCS may move to gross compensation payments.
- 7.10 The FSA is currently consulting on changes to the financial compensation scheme to facilitate fast payments. At present the scheme operates on a net basis which means that any debts owed by a customer to a failed bank would be taken into consideration in calculating whether any compensation is due.
- 7.11 Under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, where the FSCS pays out on an insolvency, it stands in the shoes of the creditors it compensates and the FSCS ranks as an unsecured creditor for dividend purposes alongside the claims of other such creditors.

- 7.12 Among other changes, the FSA is considering whether it would be more appropriate for the scheme to pay out on a gross basis. If this change is introduced, it would mean that any debts owed by a customer to a failed bank would be ignored for the purposes of calculating compensation; compensation would therefore be calculated only by reference to any positive balances held by a customer.
- 7.13 In an ordinary liquidation, rule 4.096 of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991 (“mutual credits and set-off”) provides for the mandatory and immediate setting-off of mutual credits and debits. This rule is replicated with minor terminology amendments in rule 72 but is in substance the same as the rule on which it is based. Since liquidation and the FSCS both currently deal with claims on a net basis, their respective rules are similarly aligned and until such time as the FSA may alter the compensation scheme, this rule will be applicable in a bank insolvency. This will help to preserve the like treatment of claims for compensation and dividend purposes.
- 7.14 In order to future-proof this instrument, if the FSA change their rules so that the FSCS pay out on a gross basis, rule 73 provides for a different way of determining set-off in respect of the claims of eligible depositors. In effect, set-off will not apply in the case of eligible depositors up to the limits of the compensation scheme. This will again ensure that the rules on bank insolvency and for the compensation scheme are similarly aligned to operate on a gross basis. Where an eligible depositor who also owes monies to a failed bank has an account balance (or balances) in excess of the limits of the compensation scheme, set-off will still apply as normal in respect of those amounts to determine whether that person is a net debtor or creditor in the bank insolvency.
- 7.15 These amendments will only apply to the determination of the claims of eligible depositors and will not apply in respect of the claims of other creditors to whom the existing rules on set-off will apply.
- 7.16 The instrument has been drafted based on the underlying format of relevant provisions of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991, in particular Part 4 of those Rules. It is acknowledged that the general format of the instrument is stylistically different to that taken for the Bank Administration Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009 which are being introduced at the same time to give effect to the procedure of bank administration set out in Part 3 of the Act. The differences in style largely stem from the differences in the style of the underlying legislation of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 on which the two schemes are based – the compulsory liquidation provisions in the Order versus the Administration procedure set out in Schedule B1 to the Order. However it must also be acknowledged that differences also arise from the reduced timescales that have been available to put the necessary Rules in place from the commencement of Parts 2 and 3 of the Act. These do not alter the legal effect of these sets of rules. They follow the formats in the equivalent rules for England and Wales.

- 7.17 The Insolvency Service in Northern Ireland will be carrying out a review of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991 and will be considering ways to both modernise and consolidate that instrument. As the Bank Insolvency (No. 2) Rules draw heavily on that instrument, there will be an opportunity to amend this instrument as required.

8. Consultation outcome

- 8.1 Due to the need to implement this instrument promptly to coincide with the coming into effect of the Act on the expiry of the Banking (Special Provisions) Act 2008, no public consultation was carried out; though drafts of the equivalent instrument for England and Wales were consulted on with the Bank of England, the FSA, the FSCS, the Insolvency Service and the Chancellor of the High Court. The Northern Ireland draft was considered by the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Court Service.
- 8.2 As this is the first set of Rules to be made in relation to the bank insolvency procedure, in accordance with section 125(8) of the Act the Insolvency Rules Advisory Committee has not been consulted.

9. Guidance

- 9.1 No guidance is being issued on the instrument since it is largely based on existing insolvency rules and practice which should be familiar to insolvency practitioners and their advisers.

10. Impact

- 10.1 The bank insolvency procedure as set out in Part 2 of the Act may only be instituted against a bank as defined in section 91 of the Act so it cannot be used in relation to other businesses, charities or voluntary bodies.
- 10.2 The Financial Services Authority is currently consulting on possible changes to the financial compensation scheme including the possibility of moving to gross payout.
- 10.3 The Bank of England and the Financial Services Authority will have an important role in the initial stages of a bank insolvency. Part 2 of the Act and these Rules have been developed in consultation with those bodies.
- 10.4 An Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument.

11. Regulating small business

- 11.1 The bank insolvency procedure set out in Part 2 of the Act may only be instituted against a bank as defined in section 91 of the Act.

12. Monitoring & review

- 12.1 The Bank Insolvency (No.2) Rules apply many of the existing provisions of the Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 1991, with amendments where required. It is expected that as a result of the consolidation and modernisation project mentioned above, a new version of the Insolvency Rules will be introduced. It will therefore be necessary to reconsider this instrument to ensure consistency with the new Insolvency Rules.
- 12.2 The bank insolvency procedure to which this instrument gives effect, is part of the new special resolution regime for banks introduced by Part 1 of the Act. The Banking Liaison Panel created in accordance with section 10 of the Act will monitor the impact of the special resolution regime.

13. Contact

Alison Aiken at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment Tel: 02890 548502 or email: Alison.aiken@detini.gov.uk can answer any queries regarding the instrument.