

# Corporate simplification and strategic projects

SHOOSMITHS

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# Businesses looking to improve financial efficiencies want certainty and a fixed cost solution

Our large corporate and international clients regularly undertake group re-organisation and simplification exercises to:

- Improve their financial efficiency and implement transfer pricing strategy;
- Resolve historic issues (such as dividend blocks or poor capitalisation);
- Simplify groups of companies;
- Prepare businesses for listing, sale or re-financing; or
- Implement strategic projects.

Shoosmiths' team has extensive experience working alongside a client's tax team and advisers to seamlessly deliver the above projects.

## **Our approach is different**

We work alongside clients and tax advisers from the outset to ensure that a proposed plan is deliverable from a legal perspective (both from the UK legal perspective or working with our global legal partners for cross border projects). We ensure that clients are fully aware of the implementation costs, timelines and potential challenges before they make the strategic decision to go ahead with a project.

Utilising our "Big Four" experience we understand complex tax strategies and objectives. We collaborate directly with a client's tax team or advisers throughout a project to deliver their key objectives smoothly with minimal input or project management required from the client. This approach enables us to provide fixed costs from an early stage and peace of mind that a project will be delivered smoothly, on time and budget.

We invest time to understand clients' tax/treasury objectives and associated project pipelines. This helps our clients plan internal resource, manage external advisors and coordinate senior management availability.

## Your key contact

Central to our corporate simplification team is Partner Simon Procter.

### Simon Procter



Simon is a Partner in our corporate division, having joined Shoosmiths from a large international law firm in 2017. Simon has extensive experience delivering complex restructuring projects for clients having worked with listed global groups, private equity houses and family offices, both on a UK and multi-jurisdictional basis. Simon is commended by clients for his project management and technical skills.

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## Get in touch

Please do get in touch with Simon if you want to discuss further.

In the remaining sections of this document we set out in more detail our thoughts on key drivers, types of reorganisation, smooth implementation and examples of recent work we have undertaken. However we would welcome the opportunity to meet (either in person or virtually via video call) and discuss how we can help.



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# Why bother?

**Overhauling a company's internal structure to improve efficiencies and cut costs needn't be viewed as a chore. At Shoosmiths we have developed a tried and tested, cost-effective solution to simplifying large business structures and removing the associated hassle!**

As reorganisations are technical in nature and commonly subject to statutory procedures, they are often neglected as part of the mounting 'to do' list. This can result in the associated on-going costs of a dormant business nestled within the structure soon stacking up.

Recognising that you have the everyday needs of the business to tend to and through years of experience in dealing with work of this nature, Shoosmiths is able to offer a variety of pricing solutions (including fixed fee solutions where possible). Our ultimate aim is to enable you to get on with your day job in the knowledge that we are working to remove unnecessary costs and risks.

Key drivers and benefits associated with corporate restructuring include:

- cost savings, including in the context of accounting, tax, annual company compliance and management time;
- the removal of dividend blockers in complex group structures;
- having the benefit of a simple group structure, both in terms of entity management, officers, governance and operating/reporting lines;
- managing the contingent risk profile of the entity/corporate group in respect of potential legacy issues;
- optimising business integration following an acquisition;
- simplification of balance sheets and intercompany loan arrangements;
- optimising the tax position of the entity/corporate group; and
- preparing for the "carve out" of a business or the disposal of a business division.

Reorganisations are technical in nature and frequently governed by strict statutory procedures, where failure to comply can lead to:

- the transaction being legally void or unlawful
- directors incurring personal liability
- damage being caused to the business and brand reputation.

**During legal due diligence carried out by potential acquirors, issues arising as a result of reorganisations can cause delays and additional cost or, at worst the termination of the deal.**

# Types of reorganisation

Shoosmiths regularly advises clients on technical legal issues relating to distributions, distributable reserves, debt for equity swaps, share issues and buy-backs.

Examples of reorganisation projects undertaken by Shoosmiths on behalf of clients include the following:

- intra-group business and asset transfers;
- legal entity simplification, including company dissolution and voluntary strike off;
- share capital restructuring, including capital reductions;
- share buy-backs;
- balance sheet simplification and, in particular, the unpicking of intercompany loan arrangements;
- capitalisation of debt and loan note restructuring; and
- unlocking dividend barriers.

Shoosmiths has the experience and know how required to confidently guide clients through the legal detail to achieve the desired outcome.

# Key considerations

Legal and operational consideration of the following areas will be essential to the implementation of a reorganisation project:

- tax (to maximise tax benefits and to avoid triggering potential tax liabilities);
- personnel and pensions (such as whether TUPE will apply or the relevant company participates in a defined benefit pension scheme);
- commercial contracts (i.e. to identify change of control clauses or requirements for consents);
- licences and regulatory;
- third party consents (i.e. shareholder or investor consents);
- intellectual property;
- real estate;
- directors' duties, governance and corporate benefit issues;

- banking and security arrangements (i.e. the release of charges and the closure of bank accounts);
- valuation of the assets related to the reorganisation (i.e. will market or book value be the correct reference point?)

A pragmatic approach is required and early identification of potential pitfalls will enable these issues to be addressed and managed in a way that does not impact the overall business objective.

The due diligence phase of a reorganisation is often the most time-intensive step of the process, with the bulk of the diligence work being "front loaded".

We understand the need to work seamlessly with both your in-house teams and other professional service providers (such as tax and accounting) and have a track record of doing so successfully for clients.



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# Implementation

## Planning and management of the reorganisation is critical to its successful implementation.

Restructuring a business or entity portfolio can be a significant drain on the time of management and in-house lawyers. With this in mind, Shoosmiths has developed a number of project management tools to manage the process more efficiently from a time and legal cost perspective including:

- **key issues checklist** – setting out areas of recommended pre-completion due diligence and a tool that we often utilise as a live document to monitor the status of outstanding actions and allocation of responsibility as the project progresses. The feedback we receive from clients is that this document is particularly useful in terms of facilitating input from different teams across organisations and in identifying potential legacy issues for an entity that may otherwise have been missed (whether, due to passage of time or changes to personnel)
- **legal step plans** – breaking down each legal step into a digestible format, to which tax, accounting and operational aspects can be added
- **documents list** – giving clients transparency as regards the current status of the legal documents as they evolve
- **execution trackers** – explaining how documents need to be signed (including, for example, if there are notarial requirements) and detailing the status of documents that need to be executed. This tool is invaluable when dealing with a large volume of documentation across different jurisdictions
- **briefing guides** – we have developed a number of briefing guides for directors and in-house counsel, which provide a summary guide to the often complex steps required to implement a reorganisation. For example, we have guides covering areas such as directors' duties, capital reductions and distributions, in each case, designed to highlight the key issues for directors and in-house counsel. Our briefing guides are particularly useful in the context of global businesses where non-UK directors sit on the boards of UK registered companies

Our project management approach is structured to alleviate the pressure on our clients and facilitate a time efficient/cost transparent process ensuring that work is carried out at the right levels of seniority and experience.

# Examples of recent reorganisations

A selection of recent work undertaken by Shoosmiths includes advising:

A **New York Stock Exchange listed, global, multi-billion dollar, chemicals business** in relation to:

- the tidying up of the balance sheets of 15 UK registered subsidiary companies in preparation for voluntary strike off
- documenting intercompany loan repayments, waivers and set offs
- reductions of share capital and premium in order to create distributable reserves to facilitate dividend repatriation
- transferring shares in the capital of group subsidiaries and restructuring joint venture arrangements in the UK and in the Middle East (utilising our World Service Group network) carrying an investment value of approximately £130 million
- dealing with the voluntary strike off of the companies involved/strike off objections and strategy in respect of those objections
- the identification, categorisation and treatment of historic inter-company balances

**Interactive Investor Group** (the flat-fee investment platform with £30 billion of assets under administration) in relation to:

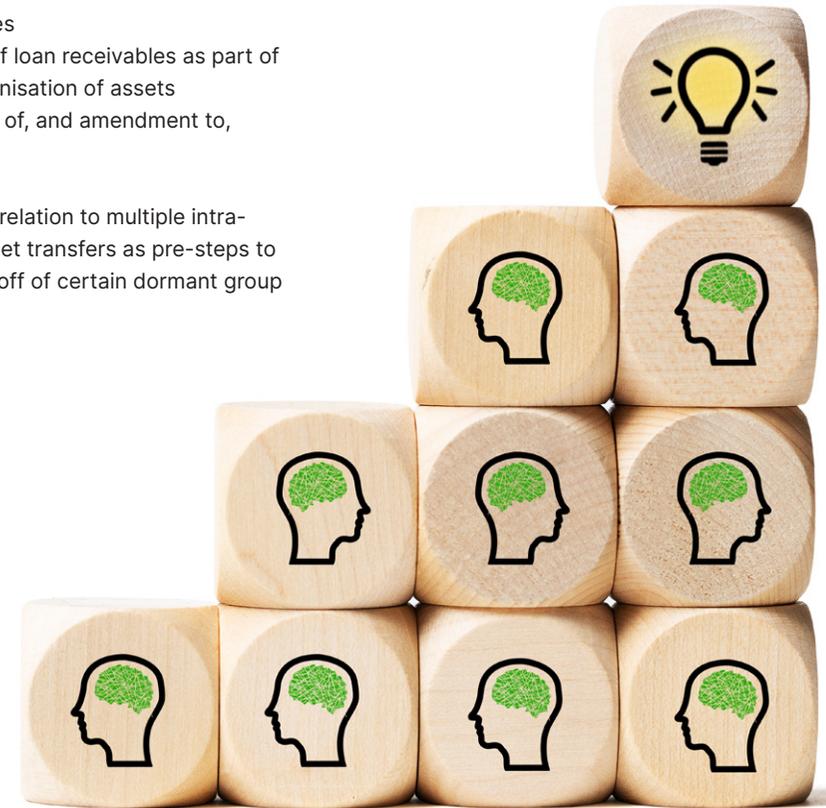
- capital contributions and equity injections to facilitate the payment of cash and non-cash dividends
- reductions of share capital
- dividend repatriation in the sum of approximately £115 million
- repayment and capitalisation of inter-company balances
- the transfer and consolidation of three trading businesses and related assets
- dealing with the voluntary strike off of the companies involved/strike off objections and strategy in respect of those objections

**Moorfield Group** in relation to the capitalisation of certain inter-company receivables

**August Private Equity LLP** in relation to:

- the capitalisation and waiver of certain inter-company balances
- the assignment of loan receivables as part of a pre-sale reorganisation of assets
- the capitalisation of, and amendment to, listed loan notes

**Highwood Group** in relation to multiple intra-group share and asset transfers as pre-steps to the voluntary strike off of certain dormant group companies



# More about Shoosmiths

**Reorganisation work is typically led by corporate lawyers. Shoosmiths has a dedicated and experienced corporate team of more than 155 corporate lawyers nationally who are supported by our specialist employment, pensions, tax, property, intellectual property and commercial contracts teams, ensuring that your project is supported by the right experts.**

Recognising that tax is often the key driver in any reorganisation, our team of skilled tax lawyers (Legal 500 Top Tier 2019) are well equipped to support you through each stage of the project from this perspective.

Shoosmiths is part of the World Services Group, an international network of law firms spanning 115 countries meaning that if a reorganisation has an international element, clients have access to this network to obtain the right legal advice in any jurisdiction required.

We are able to provide clients with a single, focused, point of contact within Shoosmiths who is responsible for all aspects of your project.

Shoosmiths is renowned in the legal sector for delivering great value and our pricing is designed to provide you with certainty over legal costs. We strive to ensure total transparency and would always agree an initial estimate and basis for charging before beginning any work. In the context of reorganisation work, using the cost and scoping tools that we have developed by virtue of frequently undertaking this type of work, we are able to carry out an upfront analysis of the legal work required and provide tailored fee proposals (including, where possible, fixed fee pricing) so as to ensure that you have that costs transparency and certainty.



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