

**Company Name:-** Hercules (Eclipse 2006-4) plc  
**Headline:-** Ashbourne Portfolio Whole Loan – Update on the Portfolio  
**Date:-** 5 February 2025

**HERCULES (ECLIPSE 2006-4) PLC**

a public limited company incorporated in England and Wales with company registration number  
5895593

(the “Issuer”)

**NOTICE TO THE HOLDERS OF**

**£666,000,000 Class A Commercial Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2018  
ISIN (Reg S Notes) XS0276410080**

**£43,950,000 Class B Commercial Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2018  
ISIN (Reg S Notes) XS0276410833**

**£25,000,000 Class C Commercial Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2018  
ISIN (Reg S Notes) XS0276412375**

**£51,000,000 Class D Commercial Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2018  
ISIN (Reg S Notes) XS0276413183**

**£29,000,000 Class E Commercial Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2018  
ISIN (Reg S Notes) XS0276413340**

(together, the “Notes”)

The Notes are admitted to the official list of the Irish Stock Exchange plc and to trading on its regulated market.

Regulation (EU) No 596/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 (market abuse regulation) requires disclosure by or on behalf of the Issuer of any inside information concerning the Issuer. The EU Market Abuse Regulation (596/2014) requires disclosure of inside information relating to the Issuer.

The Special Servicer has made the following information available to the Issuer. The Issuer notes that it has not been involved in the preparation of this information and in accordance with normal practice, the Issuer expresses no opinion in respect of the information contained in this Notice. Furthermore, this Notice is issued without prejudice to any and all of the Issuer's rights under the Transaction Documents relating to the Notes, all of which are expressly reserved.

This Notice is solely directed to the holders of the Notes (“**Noteholders**”) and should not be relied upon or used by any other person.

Please note that, in accordance with normal practice, neither the Trustee nor any of its advisors has been consulted or involved in the formulation or negotiation of the matters contemplated by this Notice or has verified the information contained in any part of this Notice.

Further neither the Trustee nor any of its advisors expresses any opinion as to the merits or purpose of the matters contemplated by this Notice or as to the action the Noteholders should take in relation to them.

Neither the Trustee nor any of its advisors makes any representation regarding the accuracy, sufficiency, relevance or otherwise of any information contained in this Notice or otherwise disclosed or to be disclosed to the Noteholders in connection with the matters contemplated by this Notice or that all relevant information has been disclosed to Noteholders in this Notice or otherwise. Neither the Trustee nor any of its advisors accepts any liability in relation to the matters contemplated by this Notice. Accordingly, the Trustee urges Noteholders who are in any doubt as to the impact of the matters contemplated by this Notice to seek their own independent financial and/or legal advice.

Capitalised terms used but not defined in this Notice shall have the meanings given to them in the Prospectus dated 5 December 2006 issued by the Issuer (the “**Prospectus**”).

## **Background**

The Special Servicer refers Noteholders to the RIS announcement relating to the Issuer and released on the Irish Stock Exchange website on 7 November 2024 (the “**7 November Announcement**”).

In the 7 November Announcement, the Special Servicer affirmed to Noteholders that, among other things, that thirteen trading care homes are currently being marketed for sale.

The Special Servicer refers Noteholders to the RIS announcement relating to the Issuer and released on the Irish Stock Exchange website on 27 November 2024 (the “**27 November Announcement**”).

In the 27 November Announcement, the Special Servicer affirmed to Noteholders that, among other things, that completion had occurred for the sale of a trading care home for a gross consideration of £1,800,000.

The Special Servicer refers Noteholders to the RIS announcement relating to the Issuer and released on the Irish Stock Exchange website on 12 December 2024 (the “**12 December Announcement**”).

In the 12 December Announcement, the Special Servicer affirmed to Noteholders that, among other things, that completion had occurred for the sale of a trading care home for a gross consideration of £7,000,000.

The Special Servicer refers Noteholders to the RIS announcement relating to the Issuer and released on the Irish Stock Exchange website on 9 January 2025 (the “**9 January Announcement**”).

In the 9 January Announcement, the Special Servicer affirmed to Noteholders that, among other things, that completion had occurred for the sale of a trading care home for a gross consideration of £1,900,000.

The Special Servicer refers Noteholders to the RIS announcement relating to the Issuer and released on the Irish Stock Exchange website on 4 February 2025 (the “**4 February Announcement**”).

In the 4 February Announcement, the Special Servicer affirmed to Noteholders that, among other things, that completion had occurred for the sale of a trading care home for a gross consideration of £2,000,000.

## **Update on the Strategy for the Portfolio**

To date, since the launch of the piecemeal disposal strategy for the portfolio, forty-four properties marketed as trading care homes have now been sold.

In addition, twenty-one properties marketed as closed care homes have now been sold.

Currently, the remaining nine trading care homes are being marketed for sale.

Based on the disposal process to date and in particular the events experienced during 2024, including a slower than anticipated take-up of the homes by interested parties; buyers, funders and their legal counsel being increasingly cautious, methodical and diligent in their legal enquiries; the availability of debt including the extended timeframes experienced with lenders and the regulatory approval

timeframes being seen (of not less than 8 months), it is estimated that the portfolio will be exited in full by December 2025.

The process is being prolonged due to extended periods of time being experienced by buyers to secure regulatory approval for the acquisition of a care home. In England, this process is taking up to eight months, while in Scotland, it is taking up to eleven months.

The regulatory authority for England has recognised that some providers have faced difficulties in using the new provider portal. In response, the regulator has implemented changes to the registration process to address these issues and enhance the overall experience for providers.

### **Ashbourne portfolio**

#### **Trading care homes**

Following the completion of the various sales, currently there are nine care homes that having been marketed for sale, are now in legal documentation.

Below is a summary of the number of trading care homes remaining in the Ashbourne portfolio as at 4 February 2025.

<u>Status</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>No of homes</u>	<u>For sale</u>	<u>%age for sale</u>	<u>Offer Accepted</u>	<u>In the legal process</u>	<u>Contracts Exchanged</u>
Trading	England	7	7	100%	7	7	1
“	Scotland	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total	9	9	100%	9	9	1

The Special Servicer has chosen not to identify such assets so as not to detract from the future trading and marketing for sale of such businesses, however it will update noteholders as the various disposal processes develop.

For those trading homes that are in the course of legal documentation, approval will be required from the relevant regulator for the proposed change of registration to the proposed new owner, with the latter taking up to 45 weeks to conclude, with prolonged re-registration periods in particular currently being experienced by buyers on the Scotland portfolio.

As the sales processes for the remaining trading care homes develop toward a conclusion, the Special Servicer will update noteholders accordingly.

### **Trading Update**

Similar to the 7 November Announcement, the Special Servicer requested of the Asset Manager and the manager of the Operator (HealthCare Management Solutions), that updated trading information on the business be prepared for disclosure to noteholders.

Such data has now been prepared and verified by the Operator and this is outlined in the attached Schedule 1.

### **Priority of Payments**

As reported in the 7 November Announcement, following the restructure & restatement of the Ashbourne Whole Loan in December 2013, a re-ordering of the priority of payments was concluded.

The Special Servicer considers that it is beneficial to Noteholders to re-affirm such priority of payments and to that end (and for ease of understanding), below is a table showing the existing priority of payments waterfall, under the current Material Non-Payment Default of the Ashbourne Portfolio Whole

Loan including those items that rank senior to the repayment of the principal amount outstanding of the Priority A Principal Loan.

The following excerpt of the waterfall as set out in the November 2013 Amended and Restatement Facility Agreement provides a description of (and amounts due) to certain creditors and the order in which any amounts received from the Borrower are applied by the Agent or Security Trustee.

Payments subject to the waterfall which rank below the categories set out in the excerpt are not expected to be recovered and so are not included.

All the data therein is as at 17 January 2025 and has been reviewed and confirmed by the Agent as correct.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount Outstanding (£)</u>	<u>Cumulative Amount Outstanding (£)</u>
<b>1st</b>	In or towards payment pro-rata of any due & payable Asset Management Fee (provided that no Asset Management Fee Subordination Event has occurred)	Nil	Nil
<b>2nd</b>	In or towards payment pro-rata of any unpaid fees, costs and expenses of the Agent and Security Trustee under the Finance Documents	Nil	Nil
<b>3rd</b>	In or towards payment pro-rata of:		
(A) *	any accrued interest or commission which has accrued due after 21 November 2013 (the “Effective Date”) but is unpaid to the Priority A Lenders; and	Nil	Nil
(B)	any periodic payments (not being as a result of termination or closing out) which have accrued due after the Effective Date but are unpaid to the hedging bank in respect of the Priority A Hedging Liabilities	Nil	Nil
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	In or towards payment pro-rata of:		
(A) *	interest due but unpaid on the Outstanding Priority A Interest Advance	Nil	Nil
(B) *	interest due but unpaid on the Outstanding Priority A Amortisation Advance	Nil	Nil
(C)	interest due but unpaid on the Outstanding Priority A Hedging Advance; and	Nil	Nil
(D)	interest due but unpaid on the Outstanding LPI Hedging Advance	Nil	Nil

<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	In or towards payment pro-rata of:		
(A) *	the Outstanding Priority A Interest Advance	Nil	Nil
(B)	the Outstanding Priority A Hedging Advance; and	Nil	Nil
(C)	the Outstanding LPI Hedging Advance	Nil	Nil
<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	In or towards payment pro-rata of:		
(A) *	the Outstanding Priority A Amortisation Advance	144,758.29	144,758.29
(B) *	the Outstanding Priority A Principal Advance (including for the avoidance of doubt, any unpaid Priority A Amortisation Payments and unpaid Priority A Amortisation Payments deferred pursuant to Clause 5.1.3 of the November 2013 Amended and Restated Facility Agreement; and	53,021,837.02	53,166,595.31
(C)	Any payments due but unpaid to the hedging Bank as a result of the termination or closing out in respect of the Priority A Hedging Liabilities	Nil	53,166,595.31

For good order and ease of understanding, please note the following definitions:

Asset Management Fee – monthly fee due to the Asset Manager

Agent – The Royal Bank of Scotland PLC

Security Trustee – The Royal Bank of Scotland PLC

Priority A Lenders – Equinox (Eclipse 2006-1) PLC and Hercules (Eclipse 2006-4) PLC

Hedging Advance Lender – The Royal Bank of Scotland

LPI Hedging Advance Lender – The Royal Bank of Scotland

\* - the claims denoted with an asterisk relate to funds that will flow to the Issuer waterfalls

## **FURTHER UPDATES**

The Special Servicer will continue to update the Issuer as the various sales processes develop.

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cc:

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Date: 5 February 2025

## **Schedule 1**

### **Larchwood Care Trading Update**

#### **Disclaimer**

This interim management statement (the “**Update Statement**”) has been prepared by Healthcare Management Solutions Limited (“**HCMS**”), the manager of the Operator of the Larchwood Care UK-mainland portfolio.

Larchwood Care is the “trading name” of the care home business that comprises the security for the Ashbourne Portfolio Loan.

Further information can be found on the Larchwood Care website at:

<http://www.larchwoodcare.co.uk/>

Nothing in this Update Statement constitutes any financial product, investment, tax, accounting or legal advice or promotion in respect of or any inducement, invitation endorsement or offer to invest or deal in any assets, securities or financial instruments in any jurisdiction. Accordingly any person in receipt of this Update Statement should not rely on or use this Update Statement for any purpose, in particular trading any debt or securities issued by any entity.

This Update Statement may include certain projections and forward looking statements. Such projections and forward looking statements reflect various assumptions of HCMS or their advisers concerning future performance and are subject to significant business, economic and competitive uncertainties and contingencies, many of which are beyond the control of HCMS. Accordingly, there can be no assurance that such projections or forward looking statements will be realised. Actual results may vary from anticipated results and such variations may be material.

The statements included in this Update Statement have not been audited or independently verified and are management estimates. No responsibility or liability is or will be accepted by HCMS or any other party, or any of their respective officers, affiliates, advisers, agents and representatives, in relation to the accuracy or completeness of this Update Statement or any other written or oral information made available to any person in receipt of these materials and any such liability is expressly disclaimed.

Neither HCMS, nor any of its respective officers, affiliates, advisers, agents or representatives undertakes any obligation to update any of the information contained in this Update Statement or to correct any inaccuracies herein which may become apparent.

## Larchwood (UK Mainland Portfolio)

### Unaudited trading statement as 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

#### Introduction

Note that this trading statement should be read in conjunction with the previous trading updates provided in the Notices to Noteholders, with the most recent being dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

In the quarter to 31st December 2024, 3 homes were sold or closed.

The results and KPIs for sold or closed homes have been excluded from the figures in this update, therefore all results and KPIs are presented on a like for like (LFL) basis for 11 homes, 3 less than in the 14 homes in the September update.

As and when further homes are sold or closed, the results from these homes will be excluded from the figures in the future updates with adjustments made to the LFL figures as required.

#### Summary Financial Performance – 3 months to December 2024

The trading results and main KPI's for the three months to December 2024 are summarised as follows:

	LFL Adjusted	LFL Adjusted	LFL Adjusted	Variance to Like For Like quarter in prior year	Variance to prior quarter
	3 months to 31-Dec- 23 £'m	3 months to 30-Sep 24 £'m	3 months to 31-Dec 24 £'m	£'m	£'m
Fee Income	7.04	7.51	7.19	0.15	(0.32)
Staff Costs	(4.49)	(4.57)	(4.70)	(0.21)	(0.13)
Operating Costs	(0.38)	(0.41)	(0.42)	(0.04)	(0.01)
Indirect Costs	(0.99)	(1.02)	(1.00)	(0.01)	0.02
<b>EBITDARM</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.51</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>(0.11)</b>	<b>(0.44)</b>
KPIs					
Usable Beds	577	577	577	0	0
Average occupancy	493	487	479	(14)	(8)
Average occupancy (%)	85.4%	84.4%	83.0%	(2.4%)	(1.4%)
Spot occupancy at period-end	492	487	479	(13)	(8)
Spot occupancy at period-end (%)	85.3%	84.4%	83.0%	(2.3%)	(1.4%)
Average weekly fee	1,086	1,174	1,141	55	(33)
CAPEX	0.32	0.38	0.21	(0.11)	(0.17)
Staff costs as a % of Fee Income	63.8%	60.9%	65.4%	(1.60%)	(4.50%)

Notes:

EBITDARM means earnings before Operator Central Costs, interest costs, tax, depreciation, amortisation, License Fee, the Management Fee, the Incentive Fee (if applicable).

The calculation of Average Weekly Fee throughout this update excludes non Covid-19 'Other Income'.

EBITDARM decreased by c.£0.44 million (29.0%) quarter-on-quarter as a result of decreased Occupancy and Income and increased Staff Costs. EBITDARM declined over the same quarter in 2023 by £0.11 million.

Average fee has decreased by £33 (2.8%); occupancy has decreased slightly quarter-on-quarter by 1.64%.

Staffing costs have increased by £130,000 (2.8%) whilst Indirect costs have decreased by £20,000 (2.0%). Operating Costs have slightly increased and thus the impact of these factors at EBITDARM level is a decrease of £0.44 million.

### **Occupancy**

On a LFL basis for the 11 homes in the portfolio as at 31 December 2024, average occupancy for the quarter decreased by 8 clients compared to the quarter to 30 September 2024.

Total website users across the quarter were 79,533, an increase of 96%. Website hits during November increased significantly to the highest number in the last 12 months leading to the jump in users across the quarter. Organic searches (clicks from free search engine listings such as Google and Bing) were down – 2,682 – down 57%. Carehome.co.uk accounted for 60 clicks.

The number of users reached by Larchwood Facebook pages was 297,814 down from 376,499 – however standing alone December 2024 was a peak month for reach.

Facebook engagement was 24,240 – up from 20,013 (21%) – boosted again by the December/Christmas posts.

As a note – video views for the quarter were 181,439 – up from 64,401 (182%) the previous quarter – again due to the Christmas effect with a great deal of engaging video content being shared.

Larchwood Linked In page gained 11 new followers with a following of 4,656. The name appeared in more than 150 searches on Linked In.

### **Average Weekly Fees**

Average weekly fees for the quarter to 31 December 2024 were £1,141 compared to the previous quarter average of £1,174, a decrease of £33 per week (2.8%).

Fee increases for all clients generally occur on 1 April each year. The status of the increases for 2024 is as follows:

English Local Authorities' (LAs) – Annual fee reviews have been formally notified by 9 of the 11 relevant LA's.

The average increase to date has been c.6.61% against the budget of 7%.

Scottish LA's – One rate covers the whole of Scotland and has been agreed centrally at 7.77% for Nursing and 8.3% for Residential clients.

Self-funder fee increases averaged c.11.25% compared with a budget of 10%. The number of clients paying top-ups has decreased from 12 over the quarter to 7 at December 2024. In the same period the number of self-funders was increased from 111 to 116 clients.

### **Costs**

Overall staff costs increased as a percentage of fee income by c.4.50% quarter-on-quarter mainly due to the higher staff costs in the quarter to December. The staff costs in the quarter to September were lower due to reduction in holiday pay accrual.

Agency usage in the quarter averaged c2,855 hours per week, a reduction of c18% on the previous quarter.

Operating Costs increased by c.2.4% from the previous quarter, rising to c.£9.62 per client day.

Indirect costs have decreased by £20,000 (2.0%) with higher Light and Heat Costs offset by reduction in Insurance Costs

## Compliance

A summary of the compliance grades for the Homes (on a country-by-country basis) is detailed below:

Grade	31-May-22	24-Jul-22	01-Nov-22	05-Feb-23	23-Apr-23	23-Jul-23	29-Oct-23	28-Jan-24	21-Apr-24	21-Jul-24	20-Oct-24	19-Jan-25
Outstanding	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	20	19	16	16	14	14	14	13	11	11	9	8
Requires Improvement	3	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inadequate	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	24	22	20	20	15	15	15	14	12	12	10	9
Compliant %	88%	91%	85%	85%	93%	93%	93%	93%	92%	92%	90%	89%
<i>Note: Homes are removed from the above analysis as and when they are closed or sold.</i>												

At 19 January 2025, 8 (89%) of the 9 English homes (those regulated by the CQC) were rated ‘Good’. With 1 home Rated as RI that was last inspected by CQC in March 2023.

There have been no changes in the grades of any homes since our last report.

## Scotland:

Average Grade	10-May-22	24-Jul-22	01-Nov-22	05-Feb-23	23-Apr-23	24-Apr-23	29-Oct-23	28-Jan-24	21-Apr-24	21-Jul-24	20-Oct-24	19-Jan-25
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
4	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
3	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Note: Homes are inspected across five areas, each being awarded a grade as follows: 1–Unsatisfactory, 2–Weak, 3–Adequate, 4–Good, 5–Very Good, 6–Excellent. The</i>												

## Capex

During the quarter to December 2024, total Capex of c£213,000 was invested into the Homes. For the twelve months to 31st December 2024, Capex on the 11 homes totalled £1.4 million.

Based upon the average number of usable beds (577) in the year to 31 December 2024, this equates to a run-rate of c.£2,426 Capex per usable bed per annum.

As part of the budgeting procedures for the year to December 2024, a full assessment of the Capex needs of the Homes was carried out which indicated a Capex budget for 11 homes for the full year of c.£1.4 million. In the 12 months to December 2024 orders placed against the Budget for 11 homes equated to 57% of the budget.

The Capex detailed above was in addition to the c.£1,580 per usable bed spent on planned and preventative maintenance and general repairs in the year to 31 December 2024.

## **Closed and Sold Homes**

At the start of the quarter to 31 March 2021, the portfolio stood at 42 trading homes.

Since that date, the following homes have closed (or are in the course of closure) and/or been sold:

- Nether Hall was sold as a going concern in January 2021
- Laureate Court was sold as a going concern in February 2021
- White Rose was sold as a going concern in March 2021
- St Mary's was sold as a going concern in April 2021
- Nayland House was sold as a going concern in June 2021
- Mountwood was sold as a closed home in July 2021 (closed June 2018)
- Sowerby House and Ty Dinas were sold as going concerns in August 2021
- Rose Martha Court closure completed in September 2021 and sold in October 2021
- Bryan Wood and Ravenstone closure completed in October 2021
- Alwoodleigh closure completed in May 2022 subsequently sold in February 2023
- Swan House and Wordsworth House were sold as going concerns in May 2022
- Broomfield Court closure completed in July 2022 and sold in August 2023
- Abbey Place was sold as a going concern in July 2022
- Hope House was sold as a going concern in September 2022
- Great Horkesley Manor was sold as a going concern in October 2022
- Kingsgate was sold as a going concern in October 2022
- Highfield was sold as a going concern in January 2023
- Stambridge Meadows was sold as a going concern in February 2023
- Alwoodleigh was sold as a closed home in February 2023
- Badgers Wood, Belmont, and The Chanters were sold as going concerns in March 2023
- Cams Ridge was sold in December 2023
- Mundy House was sold in January 2024
- Whitby House was sold in March 2024
- Appleby and Lily House were sold in July 2024
- Eastwood was sold in October 2024
- Hillcrest was sold in November 2024
- Dungate Manor was sold in December 2024

Therefore, as at 31 December 2024, the number of homes that were open and trading normally was 11. Unless stated otherwise, the results and KPIs in this update only cover these 11 homes; they do not include any of the sold or closing homes.

## Summary Financial Performance – 12 months to December 2024

The trading results and main KPI's for the twelve months to December 2024 for the 11 homes open in the year to 31 December 2024 (compared to the year to September 2024) are summarised as follows:

	<b>LFL Adjusted</b>	<b>LFL Adjusted</b>	Variance £'m
	12 months to 30 Sep 24 £'m	12 months to 31 Dec 24 £'m	
Fee Income	28.64	28.79	0.15
Staff Costs	(17.97)	(18.18)	(0.21)
Operating Costs	(1.57)	(1.61)	(0.04)
Indirect Costs	(3.99)	(3.99)	0.00
<b>EBITDARM</b>	<b>5.11</b>	<b>5.01</b>	<b>(0.10)</b>
KPIs			
Usable Beds	577	577	0
Average occupancy	486	482	(4)
Average occupancy (%)	84.2%	83.6%	(0.6%)
Spot occupancy at period-end	487	479	(8)
Spot occupancy at period-end (%)	84.4%	83.0%	(1.4%)
Average weekly fee	1128	1142	14
CAPEX	1.47	1.36	(0.11)
Staff costs as a % of Fee Income	62.7%	63.1%	(0.4%)

While some minimal State funding has been recognised by the Group in respect of Covid-19 financial assistance up to 31 December 2023, this funding has been excluded from the figures in the table above.

One home in the 11 home portfolio was loss-making in the twelve months to December 2024.

The EBITDARM for the 11 homes was c.£5.00 million for the twelve months to December 2024.

### Overall Outlook

Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards remain under significant financial pressure. We were however anticipating an average increase in fees of circa 8% from the authorities when they had all declared their 2024 rates. We now have only two local authorities who have not declared, West Berkshire who fund 18 residents and Suffolk who fund a further 10. It is our current expectation that we will see no further increases in socially funded fees and that the current average increase of 6.61% will not change until the 2025/26 increases are announced in early April. We continue to see examples of targeted projects to assist the NHS bed crisis following through into new care pathways for admissions. Support to aid recruitment is an area where we have seen some success in fee rates.

We expect that pressures on staff recruitment and wage inflation will continue into the rest of 2025, driven by improving pay rates in the NHS and the increase in Employers National Insurance.

Heat & light costs have stabilised for businesses over this financial year. The concerns on costs to businesses after the withdrawal of Government support in March 2023 has so far been unfounded. The Group did not suffer the price hikes some providers are seeing although there may be some additional costs where actual usage varies to contract predicted usage. We have seen these price variations result in charges for under usage from our supplier. The charge to Larchwood North has been withdrawn but there is still a possibility of a charge for 4 homes in Larchwood South which is being negotiated down by the company's energy broker. New charges based on actual usage may occur in February. Although the contracts are on an individual home basis, the Group was able to secure energy prices under contract prior to the material increases experienced over the last year. All homes have recently renewed both Gas and Electric contracts with all expiring on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

The rate of inflation decreased in almost every month from February 2023 (13.8%) to June 2024 (2.9%). It has nudged up slightly and seems to have settled at its current RPI of 3.5%. Although this is still above pre-pandemic rates, it has levelled out after reaching a high of 14.2% in October 2022. Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards are overall recognising the need to increase fees. English homes had an average of 9.1% fee increases in the 12 months to December 2023 with Scotland only applying 6% which applies to all LA's. However, these fees were only applied several months after inflation increases and the time lag was noticeable in results during the earlier periods of this report. We are supplying cost of care data to various government-based funders which may help to obtain inflation tracked fee increases in 2025. FNC has increased from £219.71 to £235.88 representing a 7.36% increase from the ICB's. Scotland has announced a 7.77% Nursing increase with an 8.3% Residential increase.

On the horizon are increases in National Living Wage and Employers National Insurance, both from April 2025. National Minimum Wage is to increase by 6.7%, almost double inflation, whilst increases for under 21's and apprentices increase from between 16.8% to 18%. Employers National Insurance is to increase by 1.2% from 13.8% to 15.0% with the threshold falling from £9,100 to £5,000. For staff working 40 hours per week on National Living Wage the increase in cost to the company is just below 10%.

Regulatory activity in England remains slow and there have been no onsite inspections in the period. CQC will ask for intelligence data and carry out a desk top review for any home that reaches their risk threshold. The Group now has only one service that is rated RI (date of inspection March 2023) with the remainder being rated as Good. Grades in Scotland are now Adequate or above in all services.