

News in brief

■ **Charles Taylor** Consulting has purchased run-off specialist LCL Group and LCL Acquisitions.

■ **Legal and General** has appointed **Quest Gates** as its sole liability adjuster. The contract is for both investigation and claims handling.

■ **Terry Dunning**, formerly director of construction at GAB Robins, is joining **Garwyn** as divisional director, heading up the company's new construction division. Mr Dunning will be based at new Garwyn offices in the City.

■ **Fortis Insurance** has reported an overwhelming response to its solutions centre initiative, with representatives from 686 bodyshops across the UK submitting their proposals to meet the 11 November deadline.

■ **24-hour opening from 24 November** will precipitate a surge in noise-related claims, according to a partner at law firm Ricksons. Peter Kenworthy said: "We are seeing an increase in the number of claims from the leisure industry because employers are ignoring noise regulations." According to Ricksons, an estimated 568 000 people work in clubs, pubs and bars but many do not realise they are subjected to noise levels equivalent to a jet plane taking off.

■ **Withersnet** — the national network of subsidence repair specialists — has added **Stress UK** to its panel of partner companies. Stress UK increases the member panel to four, joining co-founders

AMG waits as Liv Vic cuts its panel

By Ed Vinales

ASHWORTH Mairs Group has admitted it would be disappointed to lose its place on Liverpool Victoria and Groupama's loss adjuster panels, which are currently close to being finalised.

Having recently undergone a management buyout, which saw £62m in private equity funds invested in AMG, the company is waiting to be informed of both insurers' decisions by the end of the month.

The loss adjusting group is the only company on both panels, and is aware that Liverpool Victoria plans to streamline its panel from two providers to just one.

Kevin Wood, AMG's group managing director, said: "It would be disappointing to lose these contracts because we have long-term relationships with them. However, £62m was invested with the full knowledge



■ Wood: sign of confidence.

that these reviews were coming up and that's a sign of confidence in the firm."

Liverpool Victoria confirmed that AMG and the Claims People were both clients of the company and were competing for one position on its panel.

A spokeswoman said: "We put out a tender every three years. Due to our changing needs, we

will have only one loss adjuster on the next contract, which will start in January 2006."

Groupama has said that it also plans to restructure its claims arrangements to reflect the changing shape of its business. *Post Magazine* understands that the company has whittled the applicants down to four: GAB Robins, AMG, Cunningham Lindsey and Crawford.

Graham Gibson, Groupama's claims director, added: "We need to bring our loss adjusting panel into line with the current and future needs of the business. The review will be completed early next year."

In what is expected to be an extremely busy end of year for loss adjusting panel reviews, Royal Bank of Scotland also plans to announce the results of its review, with market sources tipping a decision before the beginning of December.

Losses in the US hit all-time high

US GENERAL insurers have paid an all-time record \$40.8bn (£23.5bn) to homeowners and businesses for insured property losses in 14 states, according to preliminary estimates by ISO's Property Claim Services unit.

The loss tally makes 2005 the costliest year for catastrophe damage already. The quarter's catastrophe losses compare with the \$23.7bn loss in third-quarter

2004, the industry's previous worst third-quarter and \$3.7bn in third-quarter 2003. Insured losses during the first nine months of 2005 now stand at \$43.8bn from 19 catastrophic events in 37 states — the industry's worst nine-month period ever, compared with \$24.7bn during the same period last year.

ISO estimated the quarter produced nearly 2.3 million claims

for damage to personal and commercial property, vehicles, boats and yachts.

At \$34.4bn, Hurricane *Katrina* was the quarter's costliest event, followed by *Rita* (\$4.7bn) and *Dennis* (\$1.1bn). Louisiana was the hardest-hit state with \$25bn in insured losses, followed by Mississippi with \$9.9bn, Texas with \$2.2bn, Alabama with \$1.5bn and Florida with \$1.3bn.

FSCS holds off on further levy

RECOVERIES made from the estates of Independent Insurance, Chester Street, and the five insolvent Kwelm insurers, have impacted the industry's compensation scheme to the benefit of all insurers.

This is according to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, which said there will be no further levy this financial year, having made "significant" recoveries so far, totalling £261m.

in the insurance broking sectors, Whiteley Insurance Consultants and BPS Insurance Brokers, with no major claims falling to the FSCS so far. It is unlikely that a levy for compensation payments will be necessary in this financial year.

"The FSCS continues to audit the work of run-off agents for the major insurance estates, such as Independent Insurance, and continues to make substantial recoveries in this sector as fur-

insolvent firms, mainly from the insurance sector. To date, £48.5m has been recovered this year in this sector and we are expecting a further dividend from the Kwelm estate."

Last week, the scheme administrators told *Post Magazine* creditors of KWELM's estate will receive 88p in the pound, from liabilities totalling almost £3bn.

The FSCS will be publishing its plan and budget in early February

Insurer in new fraud fight plea

ECCLESIASTICAL Insurance is urging insurers to fund research it thinks could help in the fight against fraudulent injury claims.

The insurer is championing muscle mapping technology from the Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre, which is currently used in professional sport, to help medical practitioners accurately diagnose personal injury claimants.

John Hall, business development manager at the MARRC, said it needed funding to complete its research into whiplash and lower back injuries.

A spokesman at Ecclesiastical added: "The technology could help claims management companies disprove fraudulent claims. We have spoken to insurers about funding but as yet no decisions have been made. We are at a very early stage."

Joe Pendle, director of client services at the Insurance Services Office, said that the UK was a long way behind North America when it came to this kind of research, and more needed to be done. "Insurance companies are reluctant to help fund this kind of research because lawyers tend to advise clients against having scans that have not been approved by orthopaedic surgeons."

However, a spokesman at the Association of British Insurers indicated it would not be backing the research: "While we support research and technological developments that lead to more effective rehabilitation, we are not in the business of funding individual schemes."

