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# LEGAL NEWS

**JUNE 2017**

THE MAGAZINE OF  
THE CONFEDERATION OF THE  
SOUTH WALES LAW SOCIETIES



## CARDIFF & DISTRICT ANNUAL DINNER 2017

Photos from the most spectacular  
Annual Dinner yet - see page 12

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT - JUNE

Since my last column there has been much momentous change in the world.

In the UK the political landscape has changed dramatically, with the calling of the snap election to be held on 8th June. Further afield, President Trump continues to dig a big hole for himself. The comparisons with the Watergate scandal that afflicted his predecessor President Nixon are, surely, more than obvious. It occurs to me that President Trump would have done well to heed the sage advice of Denis Healey in his first law of politics "When you're in a hole, stop digging". I suspect, however, that Trump's staggering conceit, audacity and breath-taking arrogance make him blind to the true reality of the danger in which he finds himself. I understand that the major bookmakers have stopped offering odds on his impeachment in his first term. Makes one wonder how safe the world is in his hands!

Other than the above reference, I promise to make this column an election-free zone as far as possible. Am I the only one who is tired already of the various attempts by the contenders to "buy" votes with promises of tax cuts, abolition of tuition fees and all and sundry? The simple fact seems to me to be that we, rather like the French in the last few weeks, have a difficult decision to make to pick the best of a bad bunch. I leave it to you all to make your personal decisions. I remain, currently, very undecided on which way I will vote.

On the Presidential front the Month of May has been busy. I was pleased to be able to attend the Presidents' and Secretaries' Conference at Chancery Lane on 5th and 6th May. Indeed, there was a strong Welsh contingent present including Clive Thomas, Richard Fisher, David Jones of Swansea Law Society, Rhys Jones of the Law Society's Wales office and others. Those of you who receive the electronic version of the Gazette will have seen the Welsh group, centre stage, in the photograph launching the Law Society election manifesto. Somehow we managed to elbow our way down the front. There was no set intention to steal the President's limelight, but I fear that the bright red tie I was wearing that day rather attracted the attention of the photographer! Still, nothing like putting Wales on the map! Cymru am Byth and all that!

On Friday 12th May I was honoured to be invited to the Cardiff and District Law Society dinner in the City Hall in Cardiff by its President Paul Hopkins. The dinner took a somewhat different tack this year for the first time, with lights, video screens and professional comparing adding to the ambiance. The principle speaker, Jeremy Bowen, was a fascinating contribution to the night, his speech regaling everyone with anecdotes and stories from his many forays into war zones for the BBC in his role as the BBC War Correspondent. Having seen him many times on the news, it was fascinating to meet him in person and to hear his stories first hand, in that quiet, half amused half ironic delivery that he had. Jeremy was an inspired choice for the evening and greatly added to the overall success of the event.

The Cardiff Law Society has chosen to support two charities this year. Velindre Cancer Care of Cardiff needs little introduction. The work they do

in this difficult area is simply outstanding, their levels of care exemplary and their tireless hard work, empathy and humanity a lesson to us all and I speak from personal family experience of their services. They deserve our continued wholehearted support.

The second charity was "Stay Strong for Ows". This was set up in the aftermath of the terrible injury sustained by Owen Williams whilst playing rugby for Wales in Japan. All of us will recollect the incident and the immediate aftermath. Fewer of us will have followed Owen since then. Even fewer will have realised the life-changing injuries with which he was left. It is a tribute, however, to this charity that, when speaking to friends and colleagues, though they may not recognise Owen by name, they have all heard of the "Stay Strong for Ows" campaign. It was a privilege and an honour to meet Owen, however briefly, at the dinner. The video footage of his past success in Rugby put into context how quickly a life can be changed forever. Whilst putting one's own problems into clear context, I was profoundly impressed with the drive, determination but above all humbling fortitude with which Owen has borne and continues to bear this volte-face in his fortunes. His determination, optimism and energy are a stark example to us all. I sincerely hope that Owen continues to prosper and extend my best wishes to him.

The dinner was such a success that, as I commented to Paul when I saw him last, the first time I looked at my watch that evening it was already into the wee small hours at 12.30am. As the dinner wound up at City Hall, the party decamped to the Vanilla Rooms at the Parkhouse Club in Park Place. Sadly, as I had to be on the riverbank in Saltford to umpire at the Avon Regatta bright and early on the Saturday, I had to eschew the temptations of partying into the early morning with those who can stand that pace. I noted that Clive Thomas was in the vanguard as the party headed to Park Place! I have heard, belatedly, that the party was still going at 2.30am! Ouch! Nevertheless, my congratulations to Paul Hopkins, Richard Fisher and all behind the organisation of the event for a most enjoyable evening.

At the Confederation change has also been in the air. The edition of Legal News in which this article will appear will be the first under its new Editor, Emma Waddingham. After many years sterling service to the Confederation in the role of Editor, Richard Fisher has decided to retire. Against that background it was most fitting that Richard be the recipient of the Simon Mumford Memorial Award at the Cardiff Dinner. The legal profession in Wales owes Richard a debt of gratitude for his tireless service that we can never hope to repay. Therefore, perhaps the most apt way of marking his retirement is to say, simply, thank you Richard for all your hard work. On a personal note, I have valued Richard's support, counsel and help throughout his time with the Confederation and especially since becoming President. The world will be a different place for his retirement, but the world changes and we must change with it. I understand that Richard is retiring to spend more time cultivating his cabbages. In that venture I wish him well!

# E 2017



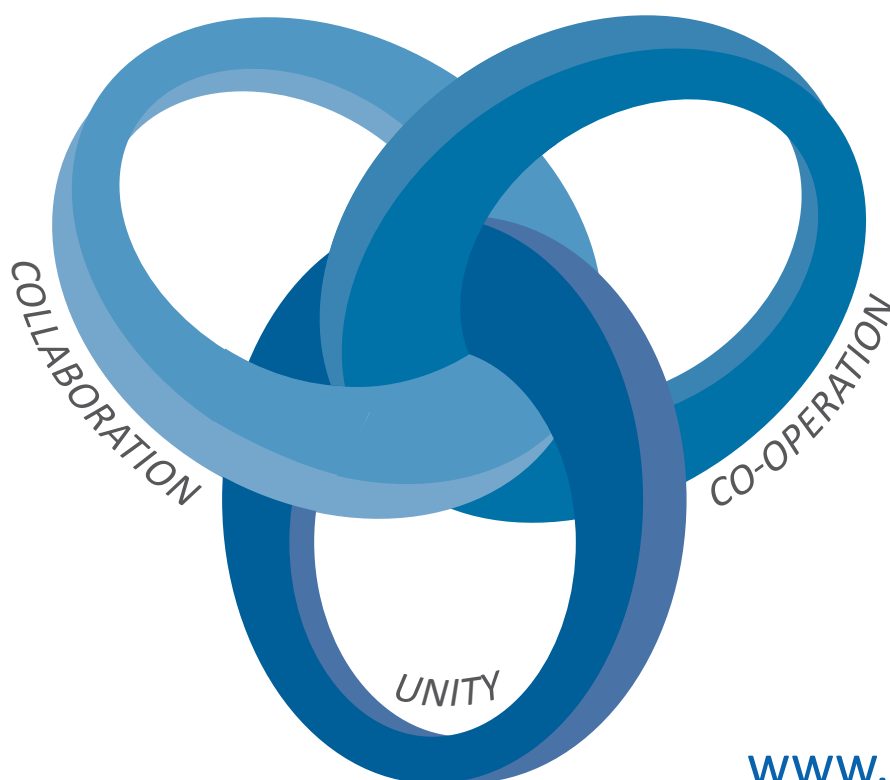
The helm of Legal News has been assumed by the capable hands of Emma Waddingham. In this transition a new direction, style and face of the publication will doubtlessly emerge. We are extremely fortunate to have Emma's outstanding talent to assist in this area. I apologise now to her for holding this article back to the last minute, but I wanted to be able to include a brief note of my attendance at the Law Society Council reception at City Hall on the evening of 16th May to round off the report of my activities.

As mentioned, I duly attended the National Law Society Council reception at City Hall in Cardiff on 16th May. The Council are meeting in Cardiff on 17th May and the reception was hosted by the national President, Robert Bourns, in advance of that meeting. It was good to see so many faces that I knew, at least one of whom I worked with in the dim and distant past in Cardiff, and to reminisce on old times as well as catch up with the whereabouts of former colleagues. Robert Bourns was his usual enthusiastic self, especially proud of his Welsh heritage. Robert has been a capable and effective President of our Society. As he comes to the end of his term of office, I wish him well for the future.

There is a much hackneyed old Chinese curse with which we are all doubtlessly familiar, roughly translated into the colloquial as "May you live in interesting times!" Whether we like it or not, we do live in interesting times. On the world stage there is much change, many threats, but much to celebrate, participate in and enjoy. Closer to home we have change in our politics, our profession and all around. Change is all around us, it never stops even though at times we all might want to shout "stop the bus, I want to get off!" We face continuing challenges as a profession and these will not recede despite the lull of the election season. There has never been more reason to stand united as a profession than now and no harm in reminding ourselves continually of the vital role we play in society. In difficult times, we should remember the value placed in and on us by our clients and those we serve. In this context, there are many positive opportunities all around. Let us therefore face the future with confidence. Above all, let us be cheerful but strive to be happy. ●

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# SO LONG AND THANKS FOR ALL THE FISH!



Wow! Time has flown by! This is my final article for Legal News as President of Cardiff & District Law Society. By the time you read this article my year as President will be over and there will be a new incumbent, Rachelle Selleck who will be the 129th President of the Society.

I have had a busy but thoroughly enjoyable year in office. It has been a true honour and privilege to have been your president and it is an experience I will cherish forever. Highlights of the year for me were attending the opening of the legal year in London which comprised a service in Westminster Abbey and a reception hosted by the Lord Chancellor in Westminster Hall; sharing experiences with former Presidents of the Society at the Past President's lunch and the parliamentary reception at the House of Lords hosted by the Law Society to celebrate the centenary of the premiership of David Lloyd George. I am delighted to report that at the Law Society Council Meeting in Cardiff on 17 May, a motion proposed by my immediate predecessor as President, David Dixon, to re-name the Old Council Chamber at Chancery Lane in honour of Lloyd George was passed by acclamation and the Law Society has accepted our offer to provide a plaque to recognise this.

On the subject of the Law Society Council, as I understand, Cardiff is the only place where the Council sits outside of London. I attended a reception at City Hall and the Council dinner at the Hilton Hotel to mark the occasion. The current President, Robert Bourns spoke about the contribution of Wales to the profession and our legal system (and politely referred to "the laws of Wales and England", which he acknowledged might upset some). He also spoke about the importance of promoting and protecting access to justice for all and the need for whoever wins the general election to put access to justice at the heart of their plans for post-Brexit Britain.

This year has been an incredibly busy for Cardiff & District Law Society. I set myself some ambitious goals at the start of my year. Many of these have been achieved but many more have fallen by the wayside in view of time pressures. I leave it to my successors to decide whether to pursue any of the initiatives that I ran out of time to progress. In the meantime, I am pleased to report that following a big push at the beginning of 2017, membership of the Society has grown and the number of firms to join our corporate scheme has increased dramatically. As a Society we have been actively engaged in the local business community, with the judiciary and with our regulator. We have represented the interests of members and the local profession on important issues including responding to consultations from Chancery Lane, the SRA and the Government. We have hosted more events than ever including a very successful Managing Partners' and directors' lunch, an admissions ceremony for newly qualified solicitors, a reception and meeting with members of the SRA Board, a Past President's Lunch, a Quiz and curry night, the very popular children's Party at Christmas, a golf day and a football match with Swansea Law Society on the weekend of the Champions League. We have also continued to grow our very successful discount scheme and started a dialogue with the judiciary over a scheme for junior lawyers to work shadow district judges. The message is that the Society is in a very healthy position and continues to thrive in a challenging legal, regulatory and business environment.

We also had a fantastic Annual Dinner at the City Hall on Friday 12 May. It was

very well attended and I hope all who were present enjoyed themselves. I have certainly received some very positive feedback from members, guests and sponsors. Frances Donovan held the evening together brilliantly and Jeremy Bowen gave an entertaining but at times quite scary insight into his experiences as a war journalist. I am delighted to say that we also raised in excess of £2,300 on the night for my two charities - #staystrongforows and Velindre Cancer Centre. This year we made a concerted effort to modernise and improve the experience at the dinner and I believe it was a success. Hopefully we can repeat this in future years and continue to make improvements.

At the dinner I acknowledged the remarkable work of individuals as well as the successes and innovations of practices and firms, both large and small in and around the City of Cardiff. We do not shout loudly enough about the achievements of our members and the local profession generally and the fantastic work they are doing to support the vulnerable in society and those in need of legal advice or seeking access to justice who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay. We should be proud of our profession and what we contribute to society.

This year at the dinner we also recognised excellence with the launch of two new awards (LPC Student of the Year and Junior Lawyer of the Year) in addition to presentation of the Simon Mumford Memorial Award for the third year. We had some outstanding applications for the LPC and Junior Lawyer Awards and the Awards Committee had to make some very difficult decisions. I congratulate the shortlisted LPC candidates Pauline Chavenet and Sharla Elcock and the ultimate winner, Grace Palmer. Many congratulations also to Lisa-Marie Knight of Acuity Legal who won the Junior Lawyer Award. I am delighted to say that on the basis of the quality of young lawyers we have in the region, the profession locally is in a very good place for the future.

This year's Simon Mumford Memorial Award went to Richard Fisher of Charles Crookes. It was a fitting tribute to Richard for his hard work, dedication and commitment to the Society for more than 30 years since he joined Council in the mid-1980s. He has been responsible for organising the Annual Dinner and the AGM for the Society for many years. He has been Vice Chairman (now called Vice President) of the Confederation of South Wales Law Societies since 2003 and editor of Legal News for the last 12 years. He was also President of the Society in 2007-2008. This year Richard steps down from many of these roles including organising the dinner and as editor of Legal News. I would like to thank him for his huge contribution to the Society and wish him well for the future.

As a final note, I would like to wish Rachelle all the best for her year in office. I am sure she will enjoy the experience as much as I did. I leave the Society in very capable hands. It just remains for me to say in the immortal words of Douglas Adams - "So long and thanks for all the fish!" ●

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# GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

I am the newly appointed President of the venerable Monmouthshire Incorporated Law Society having been told that the appointment is a “reward” for my many years as Secretary. I might have preferred a gold watch but none was on offer.

I first became involved with the Monmouthshire more years ago than I care to remember when the then Secretary, Geoff Sandercock suggested I help out as Assistant Secretary. He obviously knew something I did not, as not long afterwards he had to give up his secretarial role when he became a member of the Council of the Law Society, and in the absence of any other volunteer I stepped in temporarily, and remained in post for the next fifteen years or so! The practice it seems is that you can only cease in the role of Secretary when you can find a successor, and they are thin on the ground.

Monmouthshire is unique in that we still adopt the boundaries of the original County of Monmouth, and as we were always a hybrid (legislation and treaties were always designated to apply to “England, Wales and Monmouthshire”) we were allocated to the South Western Region of the Law Society as we were originally on the South Western Circuit. Our Council Member’s constituency is the South West and we have always been active participants in the Association of South Western Law Societies. We are however firmly in Wales and the society has always considered itself first Monmouthshire then Welsh. As a result we are also members and supporters of the Confederation of Welsh Law Societies. Equally, the society, in common with the County remains firmly independent, having voted Remain in the referendum leading to our guest speaker at last year’s dinner, Eddie Butler suggesting that perhaps we should have Mexit – Independence for Monmouthshire!

For many years the Society was successful, providing courses and social activity for the benefit of its members, and continuing to have a voice within

the Law Society itself. As sadly happens to such organisations we then went through a fallow period, but were successfully rejuvenated a few years ago when Clive Thomas agreed to succeed me. Since then the Society has gone from strength to strength, with an active Council and excellent activities, culminating of course in our Annual Ball which has become something of a highlight in the year. This year, as before, the Ball will be held at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport when we will be entertained by a guest speaker, tolerate a short speech from me, and the younger (or perhaps simply more active) will dance the night away. The Ball is on Friday, July 7th, 7pm until late. With the help of our generous sponsors the ticket price has been kept at £45 per head, seated on tables of ten. I hope to see as many of you as possible there. It promises to be an event not to be missed.

Local Law Societies remain an important conduit between the Law Society and Practitioners, and at a time when solicitors are becoming more specialised and work in greater isolation than ever before, they provide one of the only opportunities available to meet other local practitioners, exchange views and assist in the formulation of policy. Active participation in consultations can have an effect, but there can be no effect at all if we are not in the game. Local societies need and deserve support. Long may they (and particularly Monmouthshire) remain. ●

**ANDREW TWOMLOW**

PRESIDENT OF MONMOUTHSHIRE INCORPORATED LAW SOCIETY





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This year, we are running break out sessions, so please indicate on booking whether you would like to attend (a) Community Care and Court of Protection sessions; or (b) Procurement and State Aid sessions.

### For more information:

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### Conference Details

Date: 12 July 2017

Venue: Mercure Holland House Hotel and Spa Cardiff, 24 26 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DD

Registration from 9.30am, conference starting at 10am.

The conference will be finishing at 4.15pm.

### How to book?

Cost per delegate: £40 + VAT (£8.00) = £48.00

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Can you please specify which breakout session you wish to attend when making your booking.

You will be sent an invoice. We do not have the facilities to take payment by credit or debit card.

# CHANCERY LANE UPDATE

Wednesday 17 May was a bittersweet day.

Advocates for a separate jurisdiction for Wales would have been delighted that the election manifesto of a major political party promised a separate jurisdiction for Wales, but disappointed that the party concerned was the Liberal Democrats, who had conceded that they could not win the general election. 17 May was the date ITV Wales broadcast its party leaders' election debate from Penarth, but it was also the day that Rhodri Morgan, the leader who dominated Welsh political life throughout the 2000s, died. It was also the day that the Law Society council met for the fifth time in Cardiff.

Once again, the agenda was dominated by the Law Society's review of its governance.

## Governance review

Structures have been put in place to manage the review of the Law Society's governance. One important part of this structure is the chief executive. Paul Tennant, the interim chief executive, has had his tenure extended to the end of 2017. He will remain in post while the powers and role of the chief executive in the new governance structure are debated and decided. His permanent replacement will be recruited to fill that new role.

On 17 May, Council agreed to appoint an Implementation Board, which will determine an appropriate structure of sub-boards, sub-committees and committees along with terms of reference for each. There are currently four Law Society boards, six Council committees, and 25 policy advisory committees. The purpose of these reforms is to simplify the structures to improve the efficiency and clarify the functions of each board and committee so the Law Society is in good shape to represent, promote and support the profession as effectively as possible.

The Implementation Board is made up of the president, vice-president and deputy vice-president (office holders) and the deputy vice-president elect, the treasurer, the chair of the Membership Board, three other members of council, the chief executive and executive director of delivery and performance. It will bring forward proposals for Council to consider in July.

Assuming its proposals find favour with council, the Implementation Board and the current Board and committee structure will cease by February 2018 and new governance arrangements, including the new Main Board, will be in place. The Main Board will include an appointed chair, the office holders, five other council members elected by Council, two appointed solicitor members who are not council members and up to two appointed lay members. The chief executive and executive director of delivery and performance will be non-voting board members.

The role of Council is being reviewed to provide confidence that it reflects the demographic of the profession. Since this aspect of the review is about how members are represented rather than how the elected representatives

work, the Law Society will be seeking member views on any proposals for change. The president has prepared a model for the new Council which the Council Membership Committee will be considering.

## Law Society overview of SRA

Some might say that there is an innate tension between the role of an approved regulator and the frontline regulator over which it has oversight. If regulation is delegated by an approved regulator to a separate regulatory arm, when does the oversight of the approved regulator become interference with the regulator's functions?

The SRA seems to think that oversight and interference are synonyms and desires independence from the Law Society. The Law Society maintains the two are quite different and the Legal Services Board is currently investigating whether the Law Society's oversight arrangements (which had been agreed with the SRA) hinder the SRA's ability to discharge its functions. Our discussions on this vexed but important topic were long and remain confidential.

## Solicitors' Qualifying Examination

On 25 April, the SRA announced that although the majority of the 253 responses to its second consultation opposed the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), it would introduce the SQE from September 2020, "at the earliest".

If all goes according to plan, from September 2020 candidates who wish to be admitted to the Roll must:

1. Have passed SQE stages 1 and 2;
2. Been awarded a degree or an equivalent qualification (which includes CILEx level 6 assessments) or have gained equivalent experience (which covers legal apprenticeship training);
3. Have completed qualifying legal work experience under the supervision of a solicitor or in an entity which is regulated by the SRA (which includes ABS) for at least 2 years; and
4. Be of satisfactory character and suitability.

There will be transitional arrangements which apply to candidates who have started the process of qualifying (eg started but not completed their degree) when the SQE reforms come into force. The SRA will consult on new admission regulations in May (I am writing this on 19 May and they've not been published yet!) and on the transitional arrangements later this year. The SRA will appoint the SQE's assessment organisation sometime this year. The SRA promises to introduce the SQE "in a gradual and consultative way", whatever that means.



### David Lloyd George Room

The centenary of Lloyd George becoming prime minister of the UK was celebrated too mutely by the Law Society last December. When you think about it (and whatever you may think of him), it was an exceptional achievement for a solicitor for whom English was a second language and who practised in Porthmadog, which had a population of 1,000 people at the time, to have become prime minister of the UK when it was the mightiest power on Earth, and to have been a great prime minister too. He is also the only solicitor to have attained this office.

I thought that the room in Chancery Lane which used to be the council chamber (they call it the Old Council Chamber) should be re-named the David Lloyd George Room in his honour, and proposed a motion to this effect. I had to stand before Council to give a short speech to introduce the motion. I read my speech because I knew if I ad libbed I would be unable to resist quipping that after the melodrama of the New Year, the Law Society should re-name its rear entrance the Catherine Dixon Exit after the departure of the former chief executive. Luckily, the president suggested the motion should be passed by acclamation, and it was.

I'm very grateful to Robert Bourns for his assistance and to Lowri Morgan and my fellow council members from Wales (Jonathan Stephens, who seconded the motion, Carolyn Kirby, Mark Evans and Patricia Beeching) for their support. I am also pleased that several members of the Wales committee who are not council members attended the start of the meeting to see the motion passed. Finally, I thank Cardiff and District Law Society for offering to contribute towards the plaque which will be fitted to a wall in the room to explain why it is named after Lloyd George.

### Cardiff Law Society Dinner

I'd like to congratulate Paul Hopkins for hosting an excellent Cardiff Law Society dinner on 12 May. I was lucky enough to dine with the three people shortlisted for the award for LPC Student of the Year. Although Grace Palmer received the award, Pauline Chauvenet and Sharla Elcock are winners too. I hope all three had a wonderful evening which they will remember for years to come. I'd also like to congratulate Lisa-Marie Knight from Acuity Legal, who won the JLD Lawyer award.

### Richard Fisher

I sat next to Richard Fisher during the dinner. He was the deserving winner of the Simon Mumford Memorial Award. I knew Richard had edited his last issue of Legal News after 12 years of labour, because he had announced this at the last Cardiff law society council meeting. On the night of the dinner I learned that this was the last dinner he would organise after 31 years of dedication. He has been a giant on the council of both the Cardiff and District Law Society and the Confederation of South Wales Law Societies.

Before he became its editor, Legal News came out intermittently and contained filler material from outside sources. Under his editorship the magazine is issued every two months and virtually all its content is produced by lawyers within the Confederation's area. That is some feat. And he's organised more dinners than Gordon Ramsey - 31 annual dinners plus one-off dinners for retirements and the dinners which follow every AGM. Thank you, Richard for all your service to the local profession as editor and social secretary.

### Emma Waddingham

I know Emma Waddingham, who is succeeding Richard in both roles, will do the jobs in her way and will do both of them well. She did a lot of work on this year's dinner and as a former journalist, I am sure she will enjoy running the magazine. As a contributor to most of the issues of Legal News that Richard edited, I look forward to working with Emma and hope she grants me as many extensions to deadlines as Richard did. ●

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# CARDIFF & DISTRICT LAW SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER 2017

This year's Annual Dinner was the most spectacular yet, with more guests than ever from across Cardiff and South Wales to witness one of the most stunning productions we have ever hosted for Cardiff & District Law Society members.

Our guest speaker, broadcaster and presenter, Jeremy Bowen was very well received and kindly stayed with us for the duration of the evening. The presenting experience of Frances Donovan shone throughout the night and we were honoured that both VIPs helped us to present our annual awards. We were also delighted to welcome our two charities #StayStrongForOws fund and Velindre Cancer Care to the event with some powerful videos that helped to raise even more for our two charities of the year.

Many congratulations to this year's award winners: Richard Fisher who truly deserved being awarded the prestigious Simon Mumford Award; Lisa-Marie

Knight, Acuity Legal who won Junior Lawyer of the Year Award and; Grace Palmer who won the LPC Student of the Year Award. We look forward to seeing who wins next year!

Our sincere thanks to all our brilliant sponsors and to Genero Productions and Magenta Photography for their production support on the night, creating and documenting a simply stunning and memorable event. ●

**PAUL HOPKINS** PRESIDENT  
CARDIFF & DISTRICT LAW SOCIETY



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# GOING FOR A GONG!

No doubt you are all receiving the ‘enter now’ emails from national and regional awards organisers and wondering if you should bite the bullet and enter this year or if you should try again. Emma Waddingham provides a go-to guide for businesses preparing to enter this year’s awards.

**D**rafting award submissions can be tedious, challenging and time consuming! However, it’s well worth the effort as it’s a great opportunity to showcase your achievements, gain recognition and promote your brand by telling your story.

Award wins and shortlistings (yes, embrace them!) can be used to attract new clients and could open doors to new partnerships or joint ventures – assuming you apply for a credible, relevant and meaningful awards programme.

Start by working out: if a) the award or a shortlisting would mean something to your clients, b) it attracts other businesses you aspire to be pitted against and c) has a rich and engaging awards communication platform and popular awards ceremony.

Here are some top tips to help you write a great submission for an award application.

## 1. Allocate time

Time is essential to the success of your award submission. Give yourself a couple of weeks prior to the submission deadline so you don’t have to rush your responses. Often you will need to gather growth data and you’ll always need to evidence your statements. This might require testimonials so better for you to gather those in advance to ensure they relate to the submission points. If you miss the due date, you’ve missed the opportunity.

## 2. Can you prove it?

This might seem obvious but, in my experience as a former national legal magazine editor and award judge, it is always so disappointing to see a weak submission from an excellent brand due because it has failed to check the criteria and evidence its ability to meet / exceed it.

Think about what you are being asked to evidence, provide clear statements and back each one up. Look at the judging panel; what do you know about them, their achievements and the things they will classify as ‘outstanding’ if you have the evidence and success data to back up your claims.

## 3. Have you had a difficult time getting something to market?

Be honest, talk about the challenges and how you overcame them, how your service or product or brand has been embraced (again, evidence this) and why you think your efforts set precedence.

## 4. Stick to the word limit

Your answers should be succinct, well phrased and provide the most important information to help you win the award.

## 5. Be bold, go digital!

All is not lost if you’re a much better presenter than you are writer! Most awards allow you to submit a (usually brief) video entry. The same rules apply but you could also include, at the very least:

- Testimonials direct from your clients (if you can convince them to have a quote slot in the short video)
- Testimonials and brief statements from employees and those who have made your service / product or achievement come to life.

A video is a great way to communicate your brand culture and is ideal for entering client care awards. Video also works as a presentation style submission for marketing campaigns as you can include infographics and digital / TV campaign clips.

Obviously videos are huge investments time-wise but consider how the video could be reworked for use as a case study, for digital marketing and at events.

## 6. Promote your brand

Most award judges won’t know how great you are until you tell them. You must explain why you deserve to win the award in all of your answers. You can do this by including information about key milestones you have achieved and their impact on clients / partnerships, etc.

## 7. Be truthful

Always be truthful when answering questions because the truth will always come out!

## 8. Revel in your success!

Remind yourself WHY you’re entering these awards. If it’s to build profile or to gain access to the national market and industry leaders then enjoy a shortlisting if you get one! You have achieved your goal and have something to work towards next year. A worthy winner will have put the legwork in so don’t be put off; keep building on your successes!

Good luck! ●

**EMMA WADDINGHAM**

DIRECTOR OF EMMA WADDINGHAM CONSULTING



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# CHANGE, CHANGE AND MORE CHANGE

“The world is changed. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air. Much that once was, is lost.”

Many solicitors reading this may think the quotation above applies to their profession and firms... but it is in fact a quote from J R R Tolkien's Lord of the Rings novel. It certainly applies to the last two decades of the solicitor's profession, where it would be a challenge for most solicitors or firms to list the changes that they've seen to their trading methods, regulations and profitability, or recall what life was like before the current regulatory onslaught...

Or indeed to predict what comes next for those things...

The drive by the Solicitors Regulation Authority towards consumerism and the provision of digital law is relentless. There appears to be no consideration or realisation that clients of legal services are actually people, who don't want legal advice delivered by robots or their deeply personal problems considered by artificial intelligence.

Be all that as it may, there is one constant that does not change, and that is that legal firms are businesses, and their overall aims are to make a profit and grow their business, and while there are multiple options for using technology to become more innovative and efficient, there are what some would now consider old fashioned principles that can make a difference to that overall aim, and one of them is *client value*.

Profitable growth is achieved by *the provision of exceptional client value at the lowest possible cost, enabled by the ruthless elimination of waste and variation*.

Some points to note on this statement are, firstly, any business wanting to achieve this profitable growth has to understand what their clients' value? Different clients value different things, but successfully identifying them is a key stage in business development and can often make the difference in survival of some businesses in their early years, or for established businesses during an economic drought.

Secondly, the *lowest possible cost* does not mean the lowest possible price. Some legal services have been commoditised to such a degree in recent years that their price competitiveness is at extremely slender margins for those providing them, for example residential conveyancing. If the price of the service is indeed fixed by the market place, then the latter part of the statement becomes even more important – *the ruthless elimination of waste and variation*.

To illustrate this principle, we'll consider the supermarket model...

Consider the purchase of a tin of beans. In the food section aisle dealing with this, there will be several purchase options, and one of them will be for the “low cost” option, where the product is priced in the low pence area. Sometimes the price is as low as 7p, and many people would wonder why the

supermarket, or indeed their supplier would bother making and supplying the product, after all, how much profit can there be in it? It would surprise many to know that supermarkets make as much money from supplying their “bargain beans” as they do with their premium equivalent. The way they do it is to ensure that the product is made extremely efficiently, with no waste in any part of the supply chain from order to delivery, and to sell at volume.

## Isn't that exactly the model for residential conveyancing?

For the low cost beans, the supermarket has identified a demographic of their customers that values a reasonable quality at a bargain price. Equally valid for their sales will be the opposite end of the spectrum, where a premium brand is sought by a different customer demographic.

## And how do supermarkets identify these demographics and different customer values?

A lot of them use loyalty cards, where the data from an individual customer's shopping is collected, collated and analysed and used to make informed business decisions on products and services that they value and to predict what other products and services they may value. The equivalent for a legal firm would be client surveys... not the standard ones that many firms use, but a well-constructed and thought out survey designed to identify client value and service improvement areas...

Another beneficial side effect of understanding client value and growing a business is to continually improve the delivery of the products or services. The customer then receives such a good experience of either that they become loyal to the business brand and don't consider an alternative supplier for their future needs.

Imagine it, every single client ever served by a legal firm retained and returning with their business year on year...

So, to summarise;

- Understand client value by service and demographic
- Provide the related service at the lowest possible cost to the firm
- Remove process wastes and inefficiencies in the service
- Seek feedback on client value and build it into the service
- Continually strive to improve service performance and customer experience

And just maybe, in the face of constant continual debilitating change in the profession, a firm can achieve something that eventually comes at the end of Lord of the Rings;

A Happy Ending. ●

PAUL JONES CPM21







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# THE FUTURE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF SOLICITORS



## What has the SRA decided and how will it affect you?

It has been some years now since the SRA ('Socialist Revolutionary Army'?) stormed the Law Society's Winter Palace and took an iron grip on the reins of regulation of solicitors. In true Soviet style the SRA continues to press ahead on a range of proposals which are unpopular and largely unwanted by the profession.

The legal education and training of solicitors is just one of the areas affected. You will no doubt have seen in the legal press that the SRA has decided to implement its idea for a centralised assessment for solicitors (the Solicitors Qualifying Examination, or SQE), claiming 'general support' for its plans. This is despite 60% of respondents indicating that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that the SQE would be a robust and effective measure of a solicitor's competence, with only 20% in favour. Clearly the SRA has a strange view of 'general support'.

Looking ahead, the SRA's proposals will probably lead to a lot of unnecessary upheaval over a number of years for those aspiring to qualify as solicitors, for law firms and for legal education providers.

The upheaval is unnecessary because there is nothing to suggest that the current system is broken, other than (a) the cost for students and (b) the lack of training contracts. On (a) recent changes to student finance (government loans are now available to students who study the Legal Practice Course, if it contains an LLM or Master's qualification) mean that the existing system could be more affordable than what is proposed. On (b) the SRA proposals will simply shift the bottleneck from those unable to obtain a training contract to those who cannot find an assistant solicitor job.

This is not just an opinion piece or an angry letter to The Times, though. I thought it would be useful to summarise where we now appear to be following the decisions that the SRA Board made in April. I thought this might be helpful for all of you wanting to know what it means for your firm and the recruitment of your future trainees and solicitors, or even for your own children if they are of an age where they are considering studying law.

- The main point is that the SRA is planning on introducing the SQE. I won't go into the details of what goes into the SQE, as this is likely to change as the assessment is developed over the next few years, but essentially there are two stages – Stage 1 is mainly a set of multiple choice tests (designed to test knowledge) and Stage 2 is a substantial set of skills assessments. (To give you one example of how the composition of the assessment might change, the SRA is now talking about including Advocacy in Stage 1 instead of in Stage 2.)
- A candidate has to pass Stage 1 before passing Stage 2. The SRA anticipate that candidates will take Stage 1 before entering their period of qualifying work experience (on which see below) and that candidates will take Stage 2 towards the end of their qualifying work experience (i.e. shortly before seeking admission as a solicitor). However, there is no requirement that Stage 2 is taken as late as that, and many employers may

want to employ trainees who have already completed both SQE Stages before entering the office.

- The Legal Practice Course, or LPC, will disappear. There will be no requirement to study any course prior to sitting the SQE. However, it may be that some new LPC-style courses will arise, if employers consider that the requirements of the SQE (particularly of Stage 1) represent a dumbing-down, and decide that more is required of their incoming trainees. For example, unlike the LPC, the SQE has no elective content, such as Family Law or Employment Law, or advanced litigation, property or commercial subjects.
- Yet, students will need to prepare for both Stages of the SQE. How will they do this if there are no LPC-style courses available? A number of crammer courses are likely to arise (which are likely to be less than satisfactory). Also, the SRA hopes that Law Schools will alter their law degrees to incorporate the SQE content. There are big challenges to Law Schools in doing that. Cardiff University is well equipped, as we have staff who are qualified solicitors and who have considerable experience of delivering vocational subjects, but many universities in England and Wales are staffed exclusively by academics who have never set foot in a solicitor's office, let alone worked in one.
- One area where the SRA appear to have listened to the profession is on qualifying work experience (QWE), where the SRA have decided that a 2 year period (as now) should be required. QWE will replace the training contract, and there will be a wider range of contexts in which a student can build their 2 year period of QWE – up to four separate placements can be counted and these can include, say, work in a Pro Bono clinic whilst at University. There will be no requirement, though, to have seats in at least 3 practice areas, or to do both contentious and non-contentious work.

When will all of this come in? Thankfully, the SRA has pushed back its original timetable and are now saying that the SQE will not be introduced until September 2020 'at the earliest'. They have been clear that if the development process takes longer, then the timetable will be pushed back further.

Also, the SRA has indicated that there will be quite lengthy transitional arrangements, to allow students who have started to qualify under the current route (by commencing a law degree or, for non-law students, a Graduate Diploma in Law conversion course) to continue to qualify under the current route rather than sit the SQE. The SRA is currently talking about allowing students to do this up until 2030 or 2031.

For the moment, therefore, you will continue to recruit trainees who will need to have studied an LPC, and the current arrangements for qualifying will be with us for some time to come. ●

**BYRON JONES** LPC COURSE LEADER  
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