



THE e-REPORT

CITY OF WESTMINSTER AND HOLBORN LAW SOCIETY NEWS

In This Issue

[Barcelona Bound](#)

[Monitoring the Monitors](#)

[LSB Independence Rules](#)

[City firms need understanding regulator](#)

[Forthcoming Events](#)

Quick Links

[CWHLS Web Site](#)

[Law Society Web Site](#)

[SRA Web Site](#)

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I'm delighted to send you this third edition of the e-Report, the electronic newsletter of the City of Westminster and Holborn Law Society. I hope that you're continuing to enjoy what we're sending you.

Our Annual Dinner at the start of the month seems an absolute age ago now, but everyone I've spoken to has said how much they enjoyed themselves that night. I'm only sorry that there wasn't more time for people to socialise after the main event. If you didn't manage to be with us on the 3rd March, do please think about coming along next year, when you will be most welcome.

I would like to thank our Principal Guest and Speaker, Paul Jenkins - HM Procurator General and Treasury Solicitor - for his interesting and enjoyable speech, and our sponsor for the evening, Aon Risk Services, without whom we would have struggled to make things happen.

I mentioned last time that we're gearing up for the annual London Legal Support Trust sponsored walk round London on Monday May 18th. I will be leading the Society's team round the 10km course. You are more than welcome to join us. Most importantly, we are looking to raise lots of money for legal advice centres in London, so please dig deep and sponsor us at www.justgiving.com/cowhls.

As always, if you enjoy the e-Report, please do feel free to forward on your copy to others who you think may also enjoy it, using this link (which allows them to sign up for their own copy):

 Forward to a Friend

Do let me know if there's something in particular you would like us to include more (or less) of in the next edition.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian A. Barham
President

[Barcelona Bound](#)

Barcelona Bound

On Tuesday 3rd March, immediately before the Annual Dinner, our President and the President of the Barcelona Bar, Silvia Gimenez-Salinas, signed a Friendship Agreement between the two organisations.



This Agreement provides an opportunity for our members to build relationships with their Spanish counterparts, and improve the flow of information between us. It is an opportunity to learn about the law, and the practice of law, in our European neighbour.

Jonathan Cornthwaite has been appointed by the Society's Main Committee to act as our liaison delegate, and will facilitate communication between our two organisations. Whenever there are events when our members can travel to Barcelona (or when Barcelona's members visit us here in London), we will organise meetings between our respective members.

Any members of the Society who travel to Barcelona have a standing invitation to visit the Barcelona Bar offices in Calle Mallorca.

For more information about the operation of the Friendship Agreement, please contact Jonathan at jcornthwaite@wedlakebell.com.

Monitoring the Monitors

Every year the Practice Standards Unit (PSU) of the SRA visits firms across the country to review the way in which they conduct their businesses and check compliance with the Code of Conduct. The role of the PSU is to improve the standards of practice in the profession through promotion of client care and practice excellence.



Firms are profiled for monitoring visits by a risk assessment process based on information held within the SRA's systems, and on intelligence received. The monitoring visits aim to raise standards by obtaining agreement and consensus from firms for improvement following these visits.

A number of firms have raised concerns about these

A number of firms have raised concerns about these monitoring visits. As a result, we would like to understand better how these visits are conducted. One of our Law Society Council Members, Sue Nelson (a past President of this Society, a member of The Law Society Management Board and representative for the Westminster constituency on The Law Society's Council) has volunteered to attend and observe PSU visits to firms in the Westminster area to monitor the way in which the monitors exercise their functions.

If your firm is selected for a monitoring visit from the PSU in the near future and you would be willing for Sue to come along and observe the visit, please let her know by e-mailing sue@suenelson.co.uk. Anything that is observed will be treated in the strictest confidence.

LSB consults on Independence Rules



The observant amongst you will have spotted that the new Legal Services Board (LSB), created to have oversight of the Approved Regulators permitted by the Legal Services Act 2007 (of which The Law Society is one), is based within the Westminster & Holborn area, on Southampton Row.

One of the LSB's first tasks is to set the ground rules for the way in which Approved Regulators ensure that there is effective separation between their representative and regulatory functions - in the Law Society's case, how it ensures there is a distinction between the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the representative functions of The Law Society. The LSB issued a consultation paper on 25th March setting out proposals for these rules, and rules on setting of practising certificate fees, which the LSB says should see appropriately resourced regulatory bodies pursuing an agenda that is demonstrably in the public interest.

Launching the consultation exercise, LSB Chairman David Edmonds said:

"The Legal Services Act is designed to put the interests of consumers at the heart of regulation. The Act on its own is not enough. Consumers have to see benefits flow from changes in legislation. The Legal Services Board is here to make sure they do. Our proposals on regulatory independence are a first step to achieving the tangible change that's necessary.

"Ensuring that the consumer interest really is placed at the heart of the system is essential. Confidence in regulatory process will be good for consumers, good for the profession and at the heart of the public interest."

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The consultation runs until Friday 26th June, and the Main Committee of your Society will be discussing the issues it raises at its next meeting, at the end of April. Let us know what you think by e-mailing admin@cwahls.org.uk.

[Download the consultation paper](#)

City firms need understanding regulator

Change is needed in the way corporate legal work is regulated, according to an independent report by Nick Smedley commissioned by the Law Society. Smedley was formerly a senior civil servant within the Ministry of Justice, and is an independent member of the ILEX Professional Standards Board.



"Regulation of corporate legal work is in urgent need of modernisation", said Smedley. "The current arrangements for regulating this vital sector of the UK economy and legal services sector are not robust enough. Without rapid change, it is impossible to conclude that the current regulatory arrangements are fit for purpose."

The report concludes that there is a need for greater expertise and understanding at the SRA; for greater engagement with the profession and its clients; and for a sophisticated regulatory approach which recognises the differences between different parts of the solicitors' profession. It is important to regulate to avoid failures, rather than to deal with failures after the event, says Smedley.

You can [read Smedley's report here](#). A video of legal commentator Joshua Rozenberg interviewing Nick Smedley about his report can be accessed below:

[Watch video of Smedley interview](#)

Forthcoming Events

April

Monday 27th

Lecture - Climate Change Act 2008

Alex Cooke from the Department of Energy and Climate Change presents an overview of the new Climate Change Act 2008, including issues of particular relevance to firms and their clients. (1 hour CPD)

May

May

Monday 18th

London Legal Support Trust Sponsored Walk

Join the Society's President in a gentle stroll round our beautiful city to raise money for this worthwhile charity. Donate online at at www.justgiving.com/cowhls.

Contact Ivan Ho on 020 7412 0500 / ivanho@hunters-solicitors.co.uk to join the team as a walker.

[More information & booking forms](#)

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