



Law Society Council meeting summary: 17 May 2017

Council met on 17 May 2017 in Cardiff. Meeting in Cardiff has become a three-yearly tradition and was an apt reminder of the role of the organisation as the Law Society of Wales and England - particularly timely in the context of the evolving political climate in the Principality and the growing areas of divergence in legal provisions as between England and Wales. A number of Council members took the opportunity of a guided tour of the Welsh Assembly in the afternoon of 16 May. In the evening, a reception and dinner were held, hosted by Council, for a number of senior stakeholders from Wales. The keynote speaker was the Counsel General for Wales, Mick Antoniw AM. At Council the following day, Dyfed Alsop, implementation director for the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA), gave a presentation which noted that WRA will be the first non-ministerial department created by the Welsh Government, collecting Land Transaction Tax and Landfill Disposals Tax from April 2018.

Council member motion

David Dixon, Council member for South Wales, proposed a motion, seconded by Jonathan Stephens, Council member for West Country and Gwent, to commemorate the achievement of David Lloyd George in being the only solicitor (so far) to become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The proposal - to rename one of the Law Society's principal meeting rooms in Chancery Lane after Lloyd George - was passed by acclamation.

Governance

Council considered proposals to make progress on the governance review by setting up a time-limited Implementation Board to oversee the steps required to establish the Main Board and Appointments Recommendations Committee. These proposals were overwhelmingly supported. It is also planned to ask the Council Membership Committee to undertake a review of the role and composition of Council itself. Robert Bourns has written on the decisions in the *Gazette*, and you can find a link to his article here:

<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/comment-and-opinion/shaping-up-to-help-members/5061163.article>.

Council also noted the incoming President's presidential plan, which sets out Joe Egan's views on how he will ensure that he works effectively within the overall aim of delivering the Law Society's strategy to support, promote, and represent our members, including continuing the 'pride in the profession' campaign.

Promoting the profession - market and regulatory change

Significant ongoing work on issues to do with economic crime came to Council's attention. We responded to the HM Treasury consultation on draft money laundering regulations, supporting the objective of ensuring the robustness of the UK's anti-money-laundering regime but emphasising the need to avoid imposing excessive burdens on legitimate, law-abiding businesses. Our response is here: <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/policy-campaigns/consultation-responses/documents/money-laundering-regulations-consultation-response>. We are arranging webinars and events for firms in relation to the Criminal Finances Bill which will create two new offences in relation to tax evasion that will present significant compliance challenges for affected law firms. And we responded to the MoJ's consultation on corporate liability for economic crime.

We have responded to the SRA consultation on waivers which involve a proposal that any regulatory rules not based on legal requirements can be waived provided that the waiver does not conflict with the regulatory objectives of the Legal Services Act. This would be a relaxation of the current system where exemptions are granted only in exceptional cases. We have welcomed the simplification in principle, but raised concerns about consumer protection (especially in relation to the PII rules) and the lack of detail in the proposals. Our response is here: <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/policy-campaigns/consultation-responses/sra-consultation-on-rule-waivers-law-society-response/>.

Representing and supporting the profession in the public interest

Council was updated on the Law Society's plans to ensure that the interests of our members are well represented during the UK general election campaign and afterwards, with a focus on four main themes: the standing and integrity of the profession and jurisdiction; Brexit; access to justice; and the protection of human rights.

On Brexit, we have increased our activity with key stakeholders in government as well as engaging with the EU Commission, EU Parliament and UKRep.

Council members were pleased to hear that, following the publication in the *Times* of a joint letter from the Law Society and family law organisations, the government had dropped plans to allow council to apply for exemption from social care legislation: this will ensure that children's legal protection remains intact.

Service update

Council were updated on the launch of the Society's new Mental Capacity (Welfare) accreditation and the new Professional Development Centre, which now has over 45,000 registered users. Council were reminded that from June, our full practice notes will be available only to those who register with [My Law Society](#). The change has been widely communicated. Over 12,000 people have already registered.