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First Words...

I am delighted to say that the Lord President, Lord Gill, has accepted an invitation to attend and address the AGM of the Society on 27th November, which will be held at the Signet Library in Edinburgh.

In the last issue of the newsletter, I reflected on some of the significant changes and challenges facing the legal world. Whatever those changes and challenges bring, the need for high quality representation remains a cornerstone of the justice system, whether in criminal or civil cases. Lord Gill will be talking about this in his address. Further details of the AGM are to be found in this issue and you will also be receiving more information separately.

The AGM will also see the launch of two technology projects which the committee has been working on over the last few months – a new website and a new enquiry app for instructing solicitor advocates called Instruct+. The app will enable solicitors to notify members of the Society directly of the availability of instructions for appearances in any court – a first for the legal profession in the UK. There are more details elsewhere in this issue.

I also want to use my column to pay tribute to and thank our long serving administrator, Helen Mackenzie, for all the hard work she has done for the Society, not least over the development of the new

website and the app. Helen has decided to move on after the AGM. Her replacement will be Ellen Wilson, formerly of the Law Society, whose contact details will be circulated shortly.

Tom Marshall
President
Society of Solicitor Advocates

Shape The Changes...

The Committee is looking for new blood, particularly from the younger generation of solicitor advocates. You are the ones who will have to live and work in the new legal environment. So why not help shape it?

If you are interested, give one of us a call or speak to us at the AGM on 27th November.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Wifi Anyone?

The Committee is looking into the practicalities of obtaining wifi in certain court buildings, in order to help our members work more effectively on the go.

There would obviously be an ongoing cost involved in this, but we believe that the benefits speak for themselves.

We shall report back in due course.

Our Very Own Enquiry System



We are delighted to announce that the Society has developed an online enquiry system to help solicitors refer work to our members, or to obtain court cover at short notice.

Known as Instruct+ ®, the system forms part of our new website, which is due to be formally launched at the AGM. It will work like this:

Imagine that you have an appearance scheduled in the High Court in Glasgow, but you are also needed in Hamilton Sheriff Court later that same morning. You need help quickly; to give you time to properly instruct alternative representation.

Instruct+ allows you to complete a very basic website form – with your details, the area of practice your case concerns, the date, time and location – and email it to SSA members who practice in that field. No confidential information is required.

Those members who are free - and interested in offering their services - will then be able to contact the enquiring solicitor directly.

Members who are not free or not interested, do not need to do anything at all.

Members who have downloaded our Instruct+ app will also receive the message via the app, ensuring that they can respond quickly to enquiries, even when on the go.

All the communication involved, with the exception of the initial enquiry email and push message, will be made outwith Instruct+, and it will be up to the parties to sort out all the necessary arrangements. The Society, and Instruct+, will play no part in this.

The aim of the system is not only to make it easier for instructing solicitors to contact members of the Society, but to raise the profile of solicitor advocates among solicitors generally.

The plan is to automatically sign everyone up to Instruct+ when the new website launches, although you will be able to opt out if you prefer. You will all be able to login to Instruct+ using your existing membership login details and should be able to send and receive messages as soon as the system goes live.

We will let you know when this happens.

Finally, a few points to note:

- You can download the app from the App store right now, but it will not work until the system goes live.
- Those of our members who work for COPFS will not be able to receive enquiries;
- People who abuse the system will be taken off it; and
- The system will not work for you if your membership subscription is overdue! You have been warned!



New Solicitor Advocates

Five new solicitor advocates were granted Rights of Audience in the Court of Session in July:

- Steven William Jansch (DWF Biggart Baillie)
- Caroline Patricia Kelly (Thorntons Law LLP)
- Ruaraidh Graeme Brander Macniven (Procurator Fiscal Service)
- Euan Ross McSherry (DWF Biggart Baillie)
- Kirsten Claire Slee (Anderson Strathern LLP)

Two new solicitor advocates were granted Rights of Audience in the High Court of Justiciary in July:

- Anthony Joseph Kelly (Taylor & Kelly)
- Robert Edward More (George More & Company)

The Society of Solicitor Advocates wishes our new colleagues every success in the future.

Court Fees Consultation

The Society has responded to the 'Consultation on the Review of Fees Charged by the Court of Session, Accountant of Court, Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Courts, Office of the Public Guardian.'

You'll find a copy of the response in our [library](#).

New Website



Work is almost complete on the new Society of Solicitor Advocates' website. We are in the final stages of testing the website and our new enquiry system, Instruct+, and hope to have them both up and running in the next few weeks, ready for the formal launch at the AGM on 27th November.

The website will be a lot more flexible than it is at present, and you will be able to add more information to your profiles, including a biography, awards, rankings and links to social media accounts and firm profile pages.

We heartily recommend that, once the website is live, you take a few minutes to check your profile and amend it where necessary. In particular you should make sure that all your relevant areas of practice are ticked, as this will help people to find you.

We shall be in touch shortly with further details but if you have any queries please contact Helen on 01506 840476 or email contact@solicitoradvocates.org

Shaping Scotland's Court Services

The Society of Solicitor Advocates is planning a response to the recently launched Scottish Court Service (SCS) consultation on proposals for court services in the High Court, sheriff courts and justice of the peace courts.

Civil and criminal justice will be reformed in the coming years following the recommendations arising from the reviews by Lord Gill, Lord Carloway, Sheriff Principal Bowen and the forthcoming Victims and Witnesses Bill. Further changes are also anticipated following the report by the Commission on Women Offenders, chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini.

The SCS believes that these reviews will have implications for how and where court services will be delivered in the future, and is taking steps to prepare for the changes.

Full details of the proposals can be found in the [consultation document](#).

If you have any comments that you would like the Society to put forward on your behalf, please let us know by the end of November. The consultation will close on 21st December.

So You Want To Be An Advocate/Solicitor Advocate?

Two solicitor advocates – SSA President Tom Marshall and Cameron Tait, President of the Edinburgh Bar Association - will be speaking at the SYLA's 'So You Want To Be An Advocate/Solicitor Advocate?' event in March next year.

The talk will take place in the Mackenzie Buildings, Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, at 6 pm on 14th March 2013.

For further details see the [SYLA website](#).

Correction

We would like to make it clear that Gregor John Rolfe, one of the solicitor advocates admitted in May this year, is an associate with Simpson & Marwick, and not Dundas & Wilson, as we erroneously said in our last issue.

Apologies for any confusion.

Comments

If you have a comment on any issue covered in this newsletter, or if you have any news you would like to share, please email Helen on contact@solicitoradvocates.org.

Appeals Video Link Trial

The Scottish Courts Service has been looking at the use of video links for appeals, with the appellant observing proceedings from prison.

In the first instance this will be tested in solemn conviction appeals – with a test date scheduled for 22nd November.

The Appeal Court will be sitting in Court 5, Parliament House, and anyone interested in watching should attend the court in good time, bearing in mind that Court 5 has limited seating capacity.

Westlaw

The Society contacted Westlaw earlier this year to try to establish what would be involved in a group subscription to the service.

Westlaw have advised that they would be able to offer a 15% discount to members of the Society of Solicitor Advocates, but that each member would have to negotiate their subscription themselves. The cost of the subscription would depend on the particular circumstances of each member/firm.

To find out more, obtain a quote or ask for a free trial you should contact Suzanne Duddell on suzanne.duddell@thomsonreuters.com or call 07714 660873.

As a very rough guide, Suzanne advises that a small law firm with two fee earners would expect to pay around £6,500 for Westlaw UK or £3,200 for the Scots Law service, without the discount.

AGM

The Society of Solicitor Advocates is delighted to announce that the Right Honourable Lord Gill, the Lord President and Lord Justice General, will be our guest speaker at our Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 27th November 2012 at the Signet Library in Edinburgh.

Registration will open at 5.30 pm, with tea and coffee available, and the AGM will kick off at 6pm sharp. It will be followed by a drinks reception.

If you would like to attend please contact our event organiser, Lizzie Fisher of Origin Events, on 0845 301 9002 or email elizabeth.fisher@originevents.co.uk

If you wish to join the SSA Committee or have any motions to be put to the meeting please contact Helen on 01506 840476 or email contact@solicitoradvocates.org.

And Finally...

An Austrian bank robber recently learned that crime does pay, when some of the money he had stolen was transferred into his account.

According to the [Daily Mail](#), the £51,000, which was all the cash ever found of the original £150,000 stolen by Otto Neuman 19 years earlier, had not been claimed by anyone else.

The robbed bank did not want it; the insurance company did not want it; and the court needed to get rid of it...

"To say that he was surprised was an understatement," said Neuman's lawyer.