

**Issue: March 2016**

## **Springing into Action**

It has been some weeks since we received the most welcome news that many more firms than previously thought would be given the chance to stay in business. The big question is what is next?

One of the things that the CLSA fought solidly for over the last year or more was the opportunity to engage. We have always maintained that we know how the profession works better than anyone else.

Since the end of summer of last year we have been attending meetings with the MoJ and LAA. As the time has passed those meetings have become more regular and more constructive. We are now being involved in the decision making and our suggestions are not only listened to but they are acted upon. In terms of representing the interests of the profession we are now well placed and properly regarded.

We have recently been consulted upon a number of issues including the new contracts, the implementation of Leveson and the LGFS scheme.

## **What does the future hold?**

One of the terms of the engagement is confidentiality. With confidentiality comes trust. This is why as a representative organisation we have taken the view that it is not appropriate to continually post the details of each meeting on social media. We are fortunate in that due to the strong leadership of the past the CLSA are trusted by their members to do what is best.

We understand that there have been discussions on social media about what the future contracts may look like and that one of the big questions is whether duty solicitor work will continue to be allocated by headcount. We know that the current system

is broken. The scheme has become flooded with ghosts and rather than treating duty work as a bolt on many have used it as the sole source of work, in some cases paying for slots. However the work is allocated in the future this cannot continue.

At the moment we are in the early stages of discussion. We are meeting with the other representative bodies and we are working hard to try and frame a quality and sustainable future for the profession.

We have meetings and workshops with the LAA and MoJ and we are being given the opportunity to walk through some options. Those options may or may not be viable and this is one of the reasons that it is too early to open this level of detail up for wider discussion.

Whilst we cannot disclose details at this stage the one thing that we do is listen to our membership. We receive and respond to emails directly and where possible we obtain views and we debate.

## **Whose interests do we represent?**

This is a question often asked of us and the easy answer is our members. The CLSA has a diverse membership consisting of sole practitioners, firm owners of varying sizes, employed solicitors, self-employed solicitors and freelancers. There are some who say that the interests of each conflict. We disagree. Each is qualified as a solicitor. Each is driven by quality. Each wants sustainability. For the firm owners they need to be in a position to keep their business running, to employ staff and provide a service. For the individual they need to know that they have a value, they need to know that they will remain employable and to that end the interests are the same.

Whatever the method of allocation in the future the one thing that the CLSA will be doing is ensuring that firms are able to remain in business and that individual solicitors

remain employable. We know that this can be achieved and we will do our utmost to ensure that we are in a position to recommend a future that provides stability for us all.

## **Membership**

The CLSA is now recognised as a leading representative body for the profession. We are one of the largest national associations representing the interests of criminal practitioners only. Our committee consists only of practising criminal solicitors; some business owners, some employees but all passionate and committed.

As we have said before it is essential that we are fully supported by as many of the profession as possible at such a critical time which means increasing our membership.

In due course we will look to obtain the views of our members. It is essential that the wider profession knows that we are only able to take into account the views of the actual membership. It is all well and good people having an opinion and in some cases expressing it vociferously on social media but it is no good if that opinion cannot be heard and used in a constructive manner.

As current members the best thing that you can do is encourage fellow professionals to join, have their say and have it heard.

We are now launching discounted firm membership, details of which can be found on our website.

## **Meet the Committee**

The CLSA wants to be as effective as possible in representing their members. In order to achieve this it is important for members to get to know the committee and to have the ability to contact them directly should the need arise. In each newsletter we will introduce two members. Our second introductions are from the Secretary and Treasurer.

## **Secretary - Julian Berg**

Julian Berg is Secretary of the CLSA. He has been a solicitor for forty years. Throughout that time, apart from 5 years abroad, he has practised criminal law. Originating from South Wales, after 5 year articles in a firm in Cardiff, he first worked in Merthyr Tydfil. On returning from abroad, he practised in Birmingham for 22 years until moving to the gentler, picturesque pastures of Cornwall. , where he is now a Consultant attached to Cox Burley in Liskeard."

## **Treasurer - Andrew Bishop**

Andrew Bishop is the Treasurer of the CLSA. He is Managing Partner of Bishop and Light Solicitors in Brighton and has been a Criminal Defence Lawyer for 25 years. He has been an HCA for 15 years and regularly uses his higher rights. He has a particular interest in Mentally Disordered Offenders. He represents the CLSA on the National Digital Practitioners Group which is overseeing the introduction of BCM, PCU Wi Fi and the Digital Case System. Away from the office his interests are his loopy Springer Spaniel and running marathons.

**For information about CLSA membership, contact Sue Johnson; telephone: 01273 676725, e-mail: [admin@clsa.co.uk](mailto:admin@clsa.co.uk) or see: [www.clsa.co.uk](http://www.clsa.co.uk)**