

President's Incoming Message to Members

AGM 10th May 2016

The Law Society as an organisation has inclined to be generous in promoting the profession of “lawyers” other than solicitors and as a consequence has given others a platform on which to develop their credibility.

I do not intend to be in that business during my time as president of this Society, and my theme and focus will be as a solicitor to present our profession as a proud and dynamic one and the “go to people”.

We are entitled to be proud of what this branch of the profession does, and has done, and will do in the future.

Hillsborough and its outcome is a case in point. The outpouring of civic pride in that city and across the country gives a real recognition to the huge personal insult caused to a population as a consequence of a miscarriage of justice perpetrated and maintained over a number of years.

In the background was a team of solicitors and law students working to try and find a way of righting a wrong because it was part of their professional vocation to do that - whether or not they would get paid - so give yourself credit and allow others to know - that this is a profession in which people like that work.

New entrants to this profession aspire to the value of being a solicitor - we are entitled to be proud of that and should promote it.

Solicitors have been successful and we will continue to be successful because our clients recognise the value of what we do.

We focus on client's interests not slavishly but we recognise that it is sometimes necessary and sensible to exercise professional independence from the interests of the client. It is this that makes us fit to be the custodians and supervisors of legal professional privilege.

Most litigation in this country is conducted and resolved by solicitors.

We are the ones who have established the infrastructure of civil justice in this country and it is substantially owned and underwritten by us. This is something we should celebrate, as should we also celebrate the fact that women will constitute the majority of entrants into this profession by next year.

A litmus test of our success is the vibrancy in the growth of the in-house sector of solicitors in practice which is now 22% and by 2020 will increase to 35%.

The focus of deregulation under its guise of increasing competition from government is a threat which must be countered. The current and never-ending interventions to promote competition within the legal services sector by government demand the necessity for us to be the masters of our own destiny in relation to admission of people to the profession of solicitor.

Because it is the expression of our professional values that make is what we are and generate the wish of people to join us.

So regardless of our areas of practice, regardless of the nature of our clients, we are, and will remain the bedrock of the legal community which makes such a significant contribution to the economy of this country.

We all share the values of this profession of integrity independence and determination to focus on our client's interests whilst delivering our obligation to be officers of the court.

This is a proud profession and it has achieved a lot but we must work together irrespective of our size of practice, irrespective of demarcations about the nature of practice, because if we allow ourselves to be divided then we will be ruled by others.

It will be a central theme of my presidency to go out and promote the profession of solicitor within our community. I need your help to do that because I would like you to help me to take advantage of every opportunity to do that.

Your local Law Society is dedicated to your interests, so please spread that message.

Thank you very much for attending.

Lynne Naylor

Swansea & District Law Society President