

Leeds & Yorkshire Lawyer

The Official Journal of Leeds Law Society

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profession has a duty to educate the public

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Comment

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Leeds Law Society
62 Wellington Street, Leeds,
LS1 2EE
DX 12079 Leeds
Tel: 0113 245 4997

EDITORIAL

Editor: Mark Dugdale
01423 851 150
mark.dugdale@barkerbrooks.co.uk

Founding Editor:

Ian McCombie

PRODUCTION

Head of design:
Compton Sheldon

ADVERTISING

Project manager:

Matt Gotting
01423 851 150
matt.gotting@barkerbrooks.co.uk

Published by:

Barker Brooks Communications Ltd
26 Airedale House, 423 Kirkstall Road,
Leeds, LS4 2EW
Tel: 01423 851 150
Fax: 01423 740 704
www.barkerbrooks.co.uk
info@barkerbrooks.co.uk

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Leeds must remain united

Despite the ongoing uncertainty, Leeds Law Society is committed to ensuring the continuation of the community that is the city's legal profession, as president Nicholas Emmerson explains



Nicholas Emmerson,
president of Leeds
Law Society

This year is, so far, doing a cracking job at trying to beat 2020 to the worst year accolade.

The mutant coronavirus that led to Lockdown 3 is likely to lead to a general 'headsdown' until enough people have had the jab and, even then, the virus is likely to remain a shadow over us.

The twist in the Brexit tale is now seeing fishermen protesting that they no longer have access to EU markets after seeking to repatriate British waters. Is this a case of having your fish and nobody eating it, or simply that it is a bit of a mess?

The storming of the US Capitol.

Even Leeds United losing 3-0 in the FA Cup to Crawley Town.

And that was just January.

The 2020 Leeds Law Society Annual Dinner was held just before Lockdown 1 and sadly will not take place at all this year. March may see some lockdown relaxation but everything still points to us not being back in our offices then. A whole year away from our desks.

Human beings form and gravitate towards communities. Long-suffering Leeds United fans are an example. The law firms where we work are another.

The wider legal profession in Leeds is also a community. In normal times, it physically manifested itself a couple of times each year when solicitors gathered together at headline events such as the Leeds Law Society Annual Dinner, the Yorkshire Legal Awards and Pride. This community also regularly revealed itself at Leeds Law Society events.

Normal times were challenging enough for the Leeds legal community. A flourishing and competitive legal market did not embrace meeting up with solicitors from other firms as there was no 'return on investment' (ROI), where time and money was deemed better spent hunting for clients. That said, the Annual Dinner always sold out, although many of our largest firms slowly withdrew their support and membership over the years.

These abnormal times risk shattering our communities. Not being in our offices in Leeds and the isolation of homeworking is undermining

our office communities. The "I work in Leeds" badge that we all wear with pride traditionally depended upon us actually being in Leeds.

Leeds Law Society is working hard to keep the Leeds legal community together.

Cynics may proclaim that neither the society nor the community are worth saving as competitive rivalries and ROI rear their heads once more, compounded by a weak economy and new working practices that see us hotdesking in Leeds for only a couple of days a week, at best.

I disagree. Being president affords me the privilege of seeing what "I work in Leeds" really means. Of seeing those who step outside of the comfort of their firms and seek to give something back to the city and the profession locally that has given them so much.

Working with Leeds City Council to promote Leeds as a centre for legal tech and innovation. Providing equality and diversity thought leadership on a national stage through a virtual conference. Opening up the profession to those smart but disadvantaged Leeds youngsters who deserve a chance. Teaming up with the Master of the Rolls to promote the Leeds Business and Property Courts.

These are a few very recent examples. Leeds Law Society also throws a good party and fingers crossed for our 2022 Annual Dinner.

These abnormal times are tough for everyone. Leeds Law Society's office is closed and our staff are on furlough. However, we are hanging in there financially thanks to our individual and firm members who renewed their subscriptions in January and the forethought of our predecessor solicitors in Leeds who personally contributed towards buying our Albion Place property in 1920.

It is thanks to our current members and members from 100 years ago that the society should be able to survive the greatest peacetime challenge this country has faced in living memory. I hope that, when Leeds Law Society is celebrating its 300-year anniversary in 2120, that generation of solicitors will not only praise the foresight of their 1920 predecessors but commend this generation for investing in our Leeds legal community when it was at its most fragile.

This is your city, your profession and your society. You are very welcome to join us.

Keeping the show on the road

Leeds Law Society invited Laura Clapton of Consilia Legal, who is chair of Resolution West and North Yorkshire, to recap this year's Family Mediation Week



In January each year, the process of family mediation is celebrated and its benefits to many separated families, including children, is promoted nationwide. This year, Family Mediation Week fell on 18 to 22 January.

The Family Mediation Council (FMC) organised daily activities for practitioners to get involved in. At the start of the week, the FMC chair, John Taylor, hosted a virtual event that included a number of guest speakers. It was great to also hear from local Leeds-based family mediator Anna Vollans, who was involved in the unenviable task of organising the agenda for the week.

On Tuesday, a mock mediation online video was circulated and shared across various social media platforms. The video is a truly insightful piece, giving the viewer a real taste of what it is like for parties in a family mediation session. The video can be watched at familymediationweek.org.uk/resources-for-family-mediators.

On Wednesday, mediation practices around the country

took part in a virtual coffee morning. At Consilia Legal, we hosted our own virtual coffee morning, which was a great opportunity to catch up with local practitioners in Leeds and the surrounding areas and answer any burning mediation questions.

On Thursday, the team behind parenting app Our Family Wizard provided a showcase and explained how it can assist separated families in improving communication and reducing conflict.

To try and get mediation trending on Twitter to finish off the week, the FMC asked as many people as possible to tweet #FamilyMediationWeek.

It was fantastic to see so many practitioners in Leeds getting involved in the activities of the week and playing their part in promoting and sharing information about the benefits of family mediation. While separated families have experienced additional pressures and strains as a result of the pandemic, family mediation practices have done a phenomenal job of, in the words of FMC chair John Taylor, "keeping the show on the road", particularly when the courts are struggling to manage the number of family law applications and the situation does not appear to be easing.

Family mediation services deserve widespread recognition for the critical work that they continue to do to help separated families resolve conflict, not only during family mediation week but all year round.



Yorkshire Legal News

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Mark Dugdale, Editor
mark.dugdale@barkerbrooks.co.uk

Matt Gotting, Sponsorship
matt.gotting@barkerbrooks.co.uk

Web: www.yorkshirelegalnews.co.uk
Twitter: @Yorkshire_Legal

Switalskis Solicitors acquires Atherton Godfrey



Switalskis Group managing director John Durkan with Don Bird, and new director Sarah Naylor

Yorkshire law firm Switalskis Solicitors has acquired Doncaster-based Atherton Godfrey for an undisclosed sum, in a move that creates a £20 million turnover business.

Switalskis employs more than 250 staff across 11 Yorkshire offices, handling a range of specialist legal services, including medical negligence, brain and serious injury, child care, wills and probate, residential and commercial property, family law, and inquests.

Atherton Godfrey specialises in commercial, property, personal injury, medical negligence, wills and probate, and family and employment law.

The combined Switalskis group will employ 380 staff across 12 offices in West, North and South Yorkshire.

Atherton Godfrey's heads of litigation, personal injury, and commercial and property—John McQuater, Diane Parker, and Sarah Naylor, respectively—join Switalskis as directors.

Don Bird has stepped down as managing partner and joins Switalskis as a consultant. All four will continue in their departmental roles at Atherton Godfrey and the firm will continue to trade and act for clients under the Atherton Godfrey name.

The combination of these two firms puts Switalskis into the top 150 law firms in the country and makes it the third largest firm in Yorkshire with offices solely in the region.

Switalskis managing director John Durkan said: "Over the last 28 years, Switalskis has grown, both organically and via a series of acquisitions, into a highly successful firm with a strong reputation and many practitioners recognised as leaders in their field, regionally and nationally."

"Atherton Godfrey is a well-respected firm throughout South Yorkshire, with a 42-year history and specialist staff covering many of the legal services required by individuals, families, organisations, and businesses."

"Over the coming weeks and months, we will work on maximising the synergies and benefits that will flow from bringing the two firms together, as well as identifying new opportunities that will see the combined group go from strength to strength. In short, we believe Switalskis and Atherton Godfrey can do great things together."

Bird added: "Atherton Godfrey has a strong reputation for providing high quality and client-focused legal services to individuals and businesses across the Doncaster and wider South Yorkshire region."

"With the benefit of the additional network and resources of the Switalskis Group, we look forward to building on this for the benefit of our clients and those who work in our business."

Kennedys acquires insurance division from Langleys

Law firm Kennedys is moving into Leeds after acquiring the insurance division of Langleys Solicitors.

The Leeds office, located on 6 Queen Street, is the firm's second in Yorkshire, 12th in the UK and 42nd globally. The office will be led by David Thompson, who was a partner and head of insurance at Langleys.

Joining Thompson at Kennedys are partners Huw Edwards, Laura Collins and Carol Dalton, along with 32 team heads, lawyers and staff from Langley's insurance team.

Richard West, partner and head of liability at Kennedys, said the new Leeds office increases the size of the personal injury division at the firm, "expanding our practice further with an experienced and well-regarded team whose culture fits closely with our own".

West continued: "I am delighted that David, Huw, Laura and Carol will join the Kennedys liability Division at a time of exciting growth and continued success."

"It has been a pleasure to get to know them, to regard them so quickly as our friends—and to receive such wonderful feedback from clients and the market about their move to Kennedys. I am very much looking forward to working alongside them."

West said Leeds "is recognised as a hub for insurance work" and Kennedys sees opportunities to expand its legal and claims handling team as a result of the arrival of Thompson and his team.

Thompson said: "Kennedys has a first-class reputation in insurance, as well as an incredible global reach. The depth of

the firm's expertise, its culture and its market leading innovation through Kennedys IQ will be very attractive to our clients."

"It puts us in an excellent position to further grow our practice from our new base in Leeds. Many of our clients already work with Kennedys so I know that it is a move that our clients will very much support."

Commenting on the acquisition, Tim Cross, managing partner of Langleys, said: "While there is naturally some sadness in seeing our friends and colleagues leave the firm, this is a move that benefits everyone."

"It allows Langleys to focus on growing its core specialisms and explore new opportunities in the regions we serve, while also enabling the insurance team to benefit from being part of a larger, market-leading, international insurance firm."

Des Mannion, chief executive officer at Langleys, said the firm plans to focus on growth plans for its commercial and private client divisions, as well as its residential conveyancing business Home Property Lawyers, following the sale of its insurance division to Kennedys.

Mannion continued: "It is a move that benefits all parties, allowing Langleys to focus on growing its core specialisms and explore new opportunities within the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire regions it serves. It also enables the insurance team to benefit from being part of a larger, international insurance division within Kennedys."



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Keebles advises on industrial services supplier share acquisition



Yorkshire law firm Keebles recently served as adviser to Rotherham-headquartered international industrial supplier Acorn Industrial Services on its share acquisition of Gloucestershire-based R W Bearings.

Keebles advised Acorn, a part of Swedish group Axel Johnson International, on the corporate aspects of the deal, which will enable the company to continue its growth,

increasing both its regional reach and customer base.

James Burdekin (pictured), senior associate at Keebles, led on the deal and was supported by fellow associate Tom Rook.

Burdekin said: "We are pleased to have played a significant part in helping secure this investment for Acorn Industrial Services. This is a great opportunity and a good fit for Acorn in terms of size, geographical base and freedom of purchase. The company will also realise more direct purchase opportunities from R W Bearings."

"It represents a very exciting opportunity for both Acorn Industrial Services and R W Bearings, and we look forward to seeing the impact it will have on Acorn's continued growth and expansion of its regional reach and customer base."

The corporate department at Keebles boasts sector expertise in advanced manufacturing, engineering, technology, healthcare and hospitality.

Mamas & Papas appoints Gateley Legal as new adviser

The Leeds office of Gateley Legal has been appointed to act as legal adviser to nursery brand retailer and manufacturer Mamas & Papas.

Gateley Legal was instructed to provide a full-service offering, to include commercial, real estate and regulatory, among other services.

Andrew Johnson, partner and head of Gateley's Leeds office, commented: "We're excited to be working with Mamas & Papas, as it is such a well-known and respected household name."

"We're looking forward to using our extensive retail expertise to support the team."

Mark Saunders, chief executive officer of Mamas & Papas, said: "Gateley Legal brings unrivalled experience in the retail sector and will be a great asset to our business."

The Leeds office of Gateley Legal was established in 2012 and has more than 100 legal professionals operating from its city centre base.

The Leeds team acts for a number of retailers, including JD Sports, Watches of Switzerland and Gymshark.



**A Mamas & Papas store.
Credit: Gateley Legal**

Walker Morris sports law team advises on sale of Burnley FC

New Burnley owner Alan Pace.
Credit: Burnley FC



Sports lawyers at Leeds-headquartered Walker Morris advised the sellers of Burnley FC on the club's sale to US investors for an undisclosed sum.

The Premier League club was acquired by a group led by US private equity firm ALK Capital, with secured funding provided from MSD UK Holdings Limited.

The deal involves the sale of 83.97% of Burnley FC Holdings Limited, which is the parent company of Burnley Football & Athletic Company Limited, the entity that holds the share in the Premier League.

Walker Morris advised Burnley FC's chairman, Michael Garlick, as lead sell-side adviser on the deal, which involved 13 sellers in total.

A multi-disciplinary team, led by David Hinchliffe and Christian Slinger, both from the sports team at Walker Morris, advised on the sale.

Liz Coley and Katie Reed (sports), Andrew Maclean (real estate), Charlotte Smith (employment), Nicola Parkinson (tax), Owen Ormond (finance), and Simon Cuerden (corporate), also supported the sale.

Commenting on the deal, Garlick said: "I am delighted to get this deal over the line, especially in light of the difficult circumstances everyone is dealing with at the moment. My thanks go to David and Christian at Walker Morris for all of their hard work; we simply couldn't have done it without them."

"I will continue to be involved in the club in the short-term and I am looking forward to playing my part in the next chapter of Burnley Football Club as we seek to strengthen our position in the Premier League. Here is to a successful 2021!"

Hinchliffe said: "We are proud of having built a strong relationship with Burnley FC in recent years. It is a great pleasure to work alongside such a fantastic club with such strong heritage and deep links with the community."

"Opportunities to be involved in Premier League M&A transactions do not come around too often, so it has been excellent to play a key role in this deal. The acquisition will provide a solid platform for the club to move forwards and provide a successful exit for the current majority ownership group. It is a great outcome for everyone involved with the club, including the fans and the local community."

DLA Piper advises the Snowdrop Project on acquisition of new headquarters in Sheffield

DLA Piper has given pro bono advice to human trafficking survivor charity the Snowdrop Project on the acquisition of its new headquarters at 7 Castle Street in Sheffield.

The Snowdrop Project supports survivors of human trafficking by providing long-term, holistic support through advocacy, counselling, community activities, house renovation services and pathways in to education and employment, empowering them to live safe and independent lives.

It is a small but growing charity that has gone from supporting 10 people in 2015 to 167 adults and 79 children in the last year.

Snowdrop has operated from a series of temporary office spaces until now. Having this new permanent home will make a huge difference to the charity and will allow it to continue to expand the number of people it helps and the ways in which it helps them.

Lara Bundock, chief executive officer of Snowdrop, said: "A few years ago we dreamed of a building that would provide a sense of home for survivors of trafficking in the city, a place that can be relied upon to be a consistent and stable beacon of safety, security and hope."

"I am overwhelmingly excited to see the beginning of that dream realized and it would not have been possible without the incredible expertise and dedication of the DLA Piper team. We are so grateful for all that the team has done and it's been a pleasure working alongside them"

DLA Piper partner Jon Kenworthy, who is also a trustee of Snowdrop, said: "Snowdrop does wonderful work and I am delighted that DLA Piper was able to make a small contribution to help it on the next leg of its journey."

Sheffield real estate location head Nigel Howard led the DLA Piper team, which was supported by Sheffield-based real estate associate Amy Adams.

Online learning platform from LEAP

LEAP University, which launched in 2019, is an online learning platform that enables users to train and refresh their skills in using the LEAP software via an ever-expanding directory of courses.

This includes creating matters and cards, capturing matter level information, generating documents and sharing correspondence.

The university is available to every LEAP user and through attending interactive video sessions users can test themselves and evaluate how well they have digested the content at the end of the lesson.

Divided into nine key areas, comprising 25 short, easy-to-follow courses, users obtain the skills to manage a range of day-to-day tasks using the LEAP software tools. So far, 25,485 lessons have been completed since its launch.

Due to the impact of Covid-19 and the current boom



LEAP

in conveyancing, users of LEAP University have tripled since September to more than 5,000 registrations.

According to John Flanagan, head of product at LEAP: "We are finding that firms are keen to upskill their existing workforce, or if necessary, take on new staff that require training. With new courses added every quarter and accessible remotely from any device, the university has been an incredible success and provides value and convenience to our users."

"New courses will in particular focus on areas that will showcase any new LEAP features. To date the most popular have been Card and Matter management, and Client and Office accounting for LEAP Desktop."

To find out more about LEAP University and available courses, visit university.leap.co.uk.

Frenkel Topping swoops for Doncaster costs firms in double acquisition



Financial advisory firm Frenkel Topping is acquiring Doncaster-based costs law specialist firms A&M Bacon and Partners in Costs (PIC) for a combined £9 million.

A&M Bacon is a firm of civil and commercial litigation costs specialists, while PIC is one of the UK's leading specialists in this area, with lawyers and consultants as part of its team.

Frenkel Topping said the acquisitions will strengthen its offering in and consolidation of the pre-settlement professional services marketplace in personal injury and clinical negligence.

Following the acquisition, A&M Bacon chief executive Reuben Glynn and PIC chief executive Teresa Aitken will remain in their current roles.

Richard Fraser, chief executive officer of Frenkel Topping, said: "I have known Reuben and Teresa for many years and have been greatly impressed with what they and their team have built, and I very much look forward to welcoming them into the enlarged business. These acquisitions will further strengthen our offering."

Glynn added: "I am extremely excited to join the Frenkel

Topping Group. A&M Bacon has become the leading costs specialist in local government and Court of Protection. Unfortunately, last year we lost our founder Michael Bacon after a short illness. Michael was a true legal cost legend. Michael would have wholeheartedly supported this opportunity."

"Together with Frenkel Topping I am looking forward to providing the highest level of service to Professional deputies and their protected parties."

Aitken said: "The client remains the centre of everything we do at PIC. As a team we are excited to be on board with the Frenkel Topping Group to ultimately ensure that together the injured client receives a seamless service."

"We're particularly looking forward to getting involved and helping to shape the knowledge hub through training and opportunities to young adults to achieve their potential as well as the Frenkel Topping charitable foundation for those individuals who through life experience are unable to access damages to help them deal with life's challenges. Together, as a group, we're keen to make a real difference to our society."



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LCF Law completes major refurbishment programme at Ilkley office

Work is complete on a major refurbishment programme and IT installation at the Ilkley office of LCF Law, the latest investment the law firm has made across its four Yorkshire locations.

The prominent four-storey building on Wells Walk, in Ilkley town centre, is home to 12 lawyers and support staff who provide a full range of corporate and personal legal services. Improvements have been made to the exterior of the building, while it has been redecorated internally.

LCF Law, which also has offices in Leeds, Bradford and Harrogate, has invested heavily in its property estate in recent years.

In 2018, LCF Law's Harrogate office relocated to the town's tallest office building at The Exchange next to Harrogate Railway Station. Last year, the law firm also expanded its Leeds office to a newly refurbished building at 33 Park Place.

This all coincides with the law firm unveiling a state-of-the-art new IT system across its four offices that offers the highest level of disaster recovery and data protection for both clients and staff.

Simon Stell, managing partner at LCF Law, said: "Our busy Ilkley town centre office has been a base of legal services for over 50 years and has become the first port of call for both businesses and individuals in Wharfedale requiring legal advice."

"The office's central location, just off The Grove and a two-minute walk from the railway station, with lots of parking nearby, combined with its highly experienced team, who provide expert advice across all types of corporate and personal legal services, means it serves a substantial client



base throughout Ilkley and beyond."

"This refurbishment work has significantly improved the external appearance of the building, as well as the internal communal spaces and work areas. We've already received lots of positive feedback and there's no doubt it will be a great platform for our next phase of growth in Ilkley."

Stell added: "Our new IT system is another major innovation. In an economically, technologically and socially changing world, it's vital that we have the latest, flexible IT resource. It will further enhance the service our customers enjoy and gives our team a highly secure and Cyber Essentials accredited system, regardless of whether they are working in our offices or remotely."

Ison Harrison opens branch in Bingley

Yorkshire law firm Ison Harrison has opened an office in the market town of Bingley.

The move into the town by Ison Harrison, its first in the Bradford District, further strengthens its presence within

Yorkshire, where the firm has 15 branches.

Its new branch, located at 122-126 Main Street, Bingley, houses a team of five legal experts led by branch manager Claire Loftus, an expert in property law.

The rest of the team based in Bingley includes: Kathryn Gladwell, a conveyancing executive who has worked for Ison Harrison for six years; Nicole Roberts, who currently works in the law firm's new build department in Leeds; and Sarah Laughey, who is head of private family law.

Ison Harrison said it will shortly be recruiting additional staff for its new Bingley branch.

In addition to property and family law, the new branch will be able to handle all legal enquiries via its network of regional offices.

Jonathan Wearing, managing partner at Ison Harrison, said 2021 and the new branch in Bingley mark "another exciting chapter" in the firm's story.

He continued: "Opening a new office in the middle of a pandemic is brave but our business model of offering our full range of legal services through a network of offices dotted across Yorkshire has proved to be really resilient throughout."

"People have clearly valued being able to access local legal advice and have taken comfort in being able to approach a large, established modern law firm to look after them."



Hudgell Solicitors appoints Victoria Coulson to head of operations role



Hudgell Solicitors has appointed Victoria Coulson as head of operations and strategic delivery to ensure the Hull-based law firm delivers on its key growth targets over the next three years.

Her arrival at Hudgell Solicitors marks a reunion with chief executive Rachel Di Clemente. They worked together for a number of years as part of the

executive team at Minster Law.

At Minster Law, Coulson (pictured) helped spearhead projects aimed at improving the customer journey and efficiencies through the use of technology.

Di Clemente said: "I'm delighted that Victoria has agreed to join Hudgell Solicitors as she has a track record of delivering change and a real talent for guiding law firms through projects from initiation to completion."

"As a business we have set ourselves some very ambitious goals for the next three years which will only be achievable if we invest to ensure that we have the right support around us to deliver them. We must continually challenge ourselves as to what legal consumers really want and be committed to developing our services to respond to their needs."

Coulson's role will include ensuring all key support systems are effective across the entire business, according to Di Clemente.

She continued: "This is essential for us to meet the goals we have set and build on our position as a modern, agile

law firm, focused on assessing our success through one overriding measure—client satisfaction."

"[Coulson] has a vision-driven approach to decision making, strategic planning and tactical implementation, with a proven track-record of embracing the use of technology, working to ensure firms are ready for reforms and developing key relationships with insurers and business partners."

Coulson actually had a brief spell at Hudgells in 2015 when her former firm was acquired by Neil Hudgell.

She said she is delighted to be rejoining at a time when it has secured repeated national recognition for its work, including being named one of the UK's top 200 law firms by *The Times*.

"This is a really exciting opportunity for me. I'm delighted to be given the opportunity to work alongside both Neil and Rachel. We all share a fundamental commitment to client care and recognise that law firms need to continuously evolve and adapt to continue to meet the needs of those using our services."

Coulson continued: "A lot has happened since I left Hudgells in 2015. It has been transformed from a personal injury and medical negligence practice into one which now offers a wide range of legal services including an ever-expanding and hugely successful civil liberties and public inquiries team."

"The firm has been successful in evolving and adapting to changes in the market and my role will be to enhance that further and ensure we are delivering upon the ambitious strategy set out for the next three years by offering a leading, agile, modern approach to legal services whilst providing exemplary client care."

Truth Legal focuses on creating a greener future

The Harrogate firm of solicitors is collaborating with Make it Wild, a family-run conservation business, as part of its commitment to preserving the planet for future generations.

As part of this work, Truth Legal is sponsoring the planting of 1,500 trees at Make it Wild's largest nature reserve, Bank Woods.

The reserve comprises 110 acres of woodland, combining ancient trees and new species. It also has scrub and meadows, making the reserve a haven for a variety of wildlife in the area near Pateley Bridge in North Yorkshire.

The number of trees that Truth Legal is sponsoring is not random; it is planting one tree for each of the 1,500 clients that the law firm has represented since its foundation in April 2012.

Over these eight years, Truth Legal has provided legal advice and support to a wide range of individuals across the Harrogate area.

The local firm offers its services across a wide range of practice areas, including personal injury law, clinical negligence, immigration and employment law, as well as wills and probate.

By sponsoring the planting of 1,500 trees at Bank Woods, Truth Legal is supporting Harrogate's local environmental commitments and offsetting its carbon footprint. The move shows that the firm is committed to using its profits to benefit the local community and the world as a whole.

As the average hardwood tree, once matured, can absorb as much as 48 pounds of CO₂ per year, Truth Legal's contribution

could potentially offset as much as 72,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year, which is more than its Harrogate office is likely to produce in that time.

The benefits that these trees will bring will help Truth Legal to achieve its environmental goals.

The law firm, together with other local businesses, is part of Zero Carbon Harrogate. This collection of business owners in Harrogate aims to help the area reach net carbon emissions of zero by 2030. To achieve this ambitious target, Truth Legal and others are working to offset their carbon emissions and educate other companies on how they can do the same.

Sponsoring the woodland is an action that everyone at Truth Legal sees as a significant step, but it's not the only way that the firm is working to help the environment.

In a recent blog post regarding the sponsorship of the woodland, the team stated: "Our move to plant trees and sponsor the Truth Legal Woodland at Bank Woods is a firm and progressive commitment to give something back to the environment, to use our resources in ethical, and impactful way and to play our part in making Harrogate a carbon-neutral area."

"We are also proud to become a small shareholder in Long Lands Common, another fantastic local initiative of community-owned woodland in Harrogate and Knaresborough."

Moving on up

A round-up of the latest appointments and promotions in Leeds and Yorkshire



Mills & Reeve has expanded its Leeds real estate team in a move that boosts its sector expertise in healthcare, agriculture and real estate investment.

Joining the firm as a senior associate from Pinsent Masons is Victoria Hughes-Barker, who advises across the full spectrum of real estate matters with specific expertise in care home and retirement village property work, which is a key focus for the real estate and healthcare teams.

Associate Fiona Crane, meanwhile, has relocated from Cambridge to the Leeds office, which has beefed up the real estate team's agriculture and food expertise.

Crane specialises in advising agricultural clients on all areas of real estate law, including the negotiation of farming arrangements and the management of rural estates.

Simon Sherwood, head of the Leeds team at Mills & Reeve, said: "Our strategy of focusing on our core sectors has enabled us to advise a growing client base of regional, national and international clients who often require highly-complex advice."

"It is a strategy that has fuelled the growth of the Leeds real estate team, which now has seven solicitors and has proven highly resilient in these extremely turbulent times."

Sherwood added: "Our reputation in providing unrivalled expertise in the healthcare, agriculture and real estate investment sectors has been enhanced by the arrival of Victoria and Fiona who will play an integral role in the further development of the Leeds team."



Dispute resolution law firm **SSB Law** is continuing its recruitment drive with the appointment of three solicitors.

The Sheffield-based firm, part of SSB Group, has hired Lucy Flynn, David Toyn and Tariq Khan to further expand

its expertise in specialist litigation areas.

The latest round of appointments at SSB Law follows on from a year of growth during 2020, when the firm created more than 100 roles across several departments, including accounts, HR and cavity wall claims.

Solicitors Flynn and Toyn both join as commercial litigation managers. Flynn will lead and develop the firm's Japanese Knotweed department. She joins SSB Law from Graysons, where she worked for 13 years, most recently as a partner in the personal injury team.

Toyn will focus on expanding the firm's commercial litigation services, leading the team dealing with mis-sold investment schemes.

He arrives from Nottingham-based Thompsons Solicitors and has previously held positions at Unionline and Graysons.

Khan joins as a solicitor specialising in General Data Protection Regulation and will establish a new data breach department.

He also has more than 18 years of experience across occupational disease litigation and false imprisonment claims,

previously working at Burton and Burton in Nottingham.

Founded in 2007, SSB Group now employs more than 150 people in Sheffield across its divisions, SSB Law, SSB Financial and SSB Compliance.

Jeremy Brooke, co-founder and chief executive officer of SSB Law, said: "I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to Lucy, David and Tariq who each bring with them a wealth of expertise in their specialist areas. I wish them every success in their career at SSB Law."

"They join at an exciting period of investment at SSB Law as we continue to grow in order to provide the very best, accessible legal litigation services for our clients."

Brooke added: "SSB Group is one of the largest employers in Sheffield and I am proud to be continuing our recruitment drive during these challenging times. This builds upon a strong 2020, when we identified substantial business needs to expand our teams. We continue to be committed to local recruitment during 2021."



Leeds- and Harrogate-based employment and family law firm **Consilia Legal** has promoted Andy Boyle and recruited its first non-fee earning employee.

Boyle was promoted to senior associate in the firm's employment law team.

Marie Walsh, director and head of the team, said: "We are delighted to internally progress

our solicitors and this promotion is thoroughly deserved. Andy has been a key contributor to the growth of the firm, both in terms of client work and mentoring the junior members of the team."

"He has also put a great deal of effort into building a community around his rugby background and worked in collaboration with other professionals building his already robust reputation in the region."

Boyle added: "The past 12 months for the employment team collectively have been hugely rewarding, in what has been a challenging landscape for our sector in light of the introduction of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme."

"On a personal level, it is humbling to be recognised for my individual contribution to the employment team. I am immensely proud of the work the team has done to advise and inform clients, contacts and referrers through such turbulent and uncertain times."

"Looking to the future, I am hoping that we can soon return to some sort of normality. I am excited by the prospect of mentoring Matthew Bretherick through his training contract, which commenced this month, and also Kieran Conlon in his role as a paralegal."

Consilia Legal also recruited Melanie Deyes as practice manager.

On the recruitment of Deyes, Laura Clapton, co-founder of Consilia Legal, said the time had come for the firm "to expand and streamline" its practice management processes.

She continued: "Melanie fits the culture of the firm and brings all the right skills. We are thrilled that she accepted the role and we

know she will make it her own."

Deyes said: "I'm hugely excited to be joining Consilia Legal and supporting the team to deliver their ambitious business plan this year. Starting a new job in the current climate is certainly a challenge but the team has made me so welcome, I definitely know it was the right decision. I'm really looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2021 brings and making a contribution to the firm."

The past 12 months were strong for Consilia Legal, despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.

The firm completed the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses UK programme and was shortlisted in a number of categories at the Yorkshire Legal Awards, winning the Employment Law Award.

Consilia Legal also launched an online mediation platform and began trialling a four-day working week.

Walsh believes a shorter working week is the future of smaller legal practices. She said: "We want to attract and retain talent. We can't always compete with the salaries offered by larger firms. However, what we can offer is a generous bonus structure, a good basic pay level and more importantly a great work life balance, giving fee earners independence and control over their working patterns more easily."

Commenting on what is in store for Consilia Legal, Walsh said: "Like all small business owners, we have found this last year difficult, mostly so in terms of communication and retention of employees."

"Looking forward to 2021, however, we have a robust business plan in place which involves expansion in terms of team numbers and financial growth and Laura, the team and I are looking forward to putting it into practice."



Niche family law firm **Jones Myers** has strengthened its team in Leeds with the appointment of solicitor Meggie Chan.

With 12 years of experience in family law, Chan is a member of the firm's children's department and based in its Leeds office.

A specialist in care proceedings, Chan represents children, parents and extended

family members. She also has extensive expertise in child arrangement issues, including residence and contact.

Commending her empathy, enthusiasm and honest advice, clients also applaud Chan's passion for helping them to reach the best solutions for their individual situations.

Jones Myers partner Kate Banerjee, who leads the children's team, said: "Meggie's strong track record and experience highly complements the expertise of our committed team and we are delighted to have her on board."

Chan, an accredited Law Society children panel member since 2015, commented: "I was attracted to working with Jones Myers because of its long-standing reputation and how the firm is highly regarded by our industry as a leader in family law."

Jones Myers has marked a formative 24 months—expanding its geographical reach to York and making a series of new appointments across its offices in Leeds, Harrogate and York.

The firm recruited Lilly Grant and Debra Jackson last summer, and opened its office in York in 2019.

Wrigleys Solicitors welcomed new solicitors and tax professionals into three different teams across the firm over the past year.

Despite the uncertain times, Wrigleys's growth continued, and



the firm is feeling positive about the future. Managing partner Marie-Louise Hamilton said: "Notwithstanding the challenges of 2020, the firm has continued to grow and develop teams to ensure that we are able to deliver the excellent levels of service that clients expect."

"Recruiting across the diverse range of specialisms within the firm is testament to the hard work and expertise of each of those teams which in turn attracts new work and new clients."

Daniel Malley joined the trust management team at Wrigleys as a trust tax associate to assist with trust and personal tax compliance matters, including the preparation of trust accounts, trust tax returns, and personal tax returns.

Malley said: "I initially joined Wrigleys because of the great reputation the firm has for, not only the high-quality work done here, but for being a truly enjoyable and welcoming place to work—so far I have not been disappointed!"

"I have been here a little while now and have been delighted by the great working environment and the interesting variety of work I have been involved in!"

Malley joined Wrigleys from Grant Thornton and is Associate of Taxation Technicians-qualified.

Trust manager Andrew Flaherty was also recruited for the trust management team.

He specialises in compliance for trusts, estates and individuals, and is experienced in advising on inheritance tax and capital gains tax, as well as supporting trustees.

Flaherty returned to Wrigleys after a number of years working for a private family trust office in London. He said: "I am pleased to be back at Wrigleys and to see some familiar faces again. The firm's core values, inclusivity and good client base attracted me to a return up to Yorkshire again."

Wills Crump joined the Wrigleys pensions team as a solicitor from the Leeds pensions team of Eversheds Sutherland. He specialises in both private and public sector pension schemes.

Crump said: "I'm delighted to join Wrigleys. I'm pleased with the contribution I've made to the pensions team over the last 10 months of lockdowns and I'm looking forward to helping our existing clients and building our private and public sector pensions offering."

Crump is an active committee member of the North East Association of Pension Lawyers and a member of the Association of Pension Lawyers.

The latest recruit in 2020 joined the charities and social economy team.

Solicitor Mike Ford advises on structural transactions such as mergers, reorganisations and joint ventures, operational and commercial matters, including agreements for services, sub-contracting and funding arrangements with third parties, and raising social finance, including in relation to share and bond issues.

Ford said: "I moved to Wrigleys from a large, global business law firm to join the charities and social economy team because I wanted a more varied role and to work for clients who are genuinely trying to make the world a better place."

Most recently, Ford completed an employee ownership matter advising family-owned business Wheatlands Aire Valley Engineering, and its owners James and Joanne Bailey, on a transition to employee ownership by way of an employee ownership trust with WAVE EOT Limited as corporate trustee.



Leeds-based firm **Tyr Law** has continued its recent growth with the recruitment of partner Chris Blanter.

Blanter was previously a partner at Schofield Sweeney and joined to lead the corporate team at Tyr Law. He has been part of the corporate community in Leeds for nearly 20 years, working at LCF Law,

Pinsent Masons and Eversheds.

During this time, he has built a strong network of contacts and clients acting for a wide range of local and national businesses, from small- to medium-sized enterprises through to large public and private companies.

Tyr Law has quickly established itself as a leading commercial firm. Blanter is the fourth partner to join in the past year, as the firm continues to grow, even in the current challenging climate. Two more partners will join in the next few weeks.

Managing partner Dean Jowett said "We are attracting the highest quality work and clients locally, nationally and internationally."

"With the recruitment of Chris and others who will join early in 2021, we have completed our aim of becoming a full service firm that really stands out with its focus on working in partnership with our clients and delivering great service.

"Chris is a great addition who gives real weight to our corporate offering and complements the wider team of partners across the firm."

Blanter added: "I am excited to have joined such a dynamic firm and to be given the opportunity to develop the firm's corporate practice. Tyr Law mirrors my ambitions and will be a great fit for my clients."

"The calibre of lawyers and their client base is impressive and I am looking forward to being a part of the firm's continuing growth and success."

Gordons has expanded its commercial contracts team with the appointment of solicitor Lauren Wills-Dixon.

She joins the firm from the Leeds office of Addleshaw Goddard where she was an associate in the commercial team. The appointment marks a return to Gordons for Wills-Dixon, who previously worked at the firm as a paralegal in 2016. While at Addleshaw Goddard, she spent six months seconded to the legal team at Asda.

Gordons is a retail specialist law firm with clients including AO, B&M, Freeman Grattan, Iceland Foods, Morrisons, Moss Bros, Oak Furniture Land and Wren Kitchens, so Wills-Dixon's appointment complements the team's expertise in the sector.

Commenting on her appointment, Wills-Dixon said: "I enjoyed my time at Gordons, so it is great to be back. What sets the firm apart is the strength of its brand, the sense of togetherness of its people and Gordons' one firm' mentality. This translates directly into the way they go about providing practical advice to their clients."

Welcoming Wills-Dixon to the firm, partner and head of commercial, Andy Brian, said: "We are delighted to welcome Lauren back to Gordons and to the commercial contracts team. She is a technically capable lawyer who will fit into the team well and get on with our clients."

"Her retail sector experience is extremely relevant to us. As Lauren did with Asda, I also spent time working in-house with one of the country's major retailers, and I know just how invaluable that direct sector experience will prove to be."

"Our commercial contract work is up year-on-year despite us being in the middle of a global pandemic, which speaks to the quality of our client base and the trust they have placed in us in these difficult times."



Law firm **Womble Bond**

Dickinson has confirmed a number of senior promotions across its UK offices, including two new partners and three new associates in Leeds.

Vicky McCombe and Sam Dixon have both been promoted to partner.

McCombe works in Womble Bond Dickinson's construction and engineering team; She has more than 10 years of experience and advises developers, local authorities, retailers, manufacturers and others on transactional construction work.

Dixon works in the restructuring and insolvency team. He is a qualified insolvency practitioner and has particular experience in the education, healthcare and technology sectors.

The new associates at Womble Bond Dickinson include Beth Kalischer, Amy Galloway and Tim Barber, who all work in the corporate and commercial team.

The news in Leeds is part of a wider raft of promotions across Womble Bond Dickinson's offices in the UK.

Jonathan Blair, UK managing partner at Womble Bond Dickinson, commented: "Congratulations to all of our new partners, legal directors and associates, who have all made fantastic contributions to our business. Their hard work, commitment to the firm and first rate legal expertise deserves to be recognised and celebrated."

"The career development opportunities of our people continues to be a high priority and these promotions signify an important investment in the future of our firm."

The promotions bring the total number of UK partners at Womble Bond Dickinson to 132 and follow a number of senior hires across the firm, including new real estate partner Kathryn Wood in Leeds.



Fenchurch Law has added to its Leeds-based team with the appointment of Toby Nabarro as an associate.

Nabarro, who joins from DLA Piper, where he was a trainee solicitor working on litigation and commercial dispute resolution, will work across all the firm's insurance-focused practice areas, including construction, financial and commercial, professional, property, and product and environmental risks.

Fenchurch Law opened its Leeds office in September 2020 to extend its wording and claims disputes services to local and regional brokers and their clients, and to launch Fenchurch Advocacy Services, a dedicated claims advocacy service for insurance brokers.

Daniel Robin, senior associate solicitor at Fenchurch Law in Leeds, commented: "We are building a dedicated hub of claims dispute and advisory support in Leeds to offer wider access to brokers across the region and more widely in the North of England. I'm pleased to welcome Toby to our growing team and his appointment demonstrates our commitment to ensuring easy access to the expert support policyholders need when a dispute arises."

Yorkshire legal profession celebrates at virtual awards ceremony

A host of law firms and solicitors were recognised as the Yorkshire legal profession's best and brightest during the online broadcast of the Yorkshire Legal Awards 2020 in December.

Stewarts, Howard & Byrne, Clarion and FTA Law were among the winners announced during the ceremony broadcast on yorkshirelegalnews.co.uk, where the profession celebrated the successes of the past 12 months and its dedication to serving and supporting clients during these difficult times.

Stewarts took home the Large Law Firm Award. Described by the judges as a great firm that is bringing London quality work to Leeds, this specialist firm is excelling in a number of litigation areas, including catastrophic injury, matrimoney and commercial law.

Stewarts is also a leader in delivering pro bono legal advice in Yorkshire.

Howard & Byrne had a superb evening, winning the Small Law Firm Award and the Criminal Law Award.

The firm is a dedicated supporter of promoting the profession internally and externally, by investing in the careers of its own members of staff and flying the flag for criminal justice. This firm is always giving back in both Yorkshire and internationally.

Clarion won Medium Law Firm Award, with the judges describing the firm as very much a local success story, while FTA Law impressed in a fiercely competitive category, reflecting the increasing excellence of boutique law firms in Yorkshire.

Among the multiple award winners were Schofield Sweeney, which took home the Commercial Property Award and the Litigation & Dispute Resolution Award. The judges said this firm has gone from strength to strength over the past few years.

Of the individuals to be recognised at this year's Yorkshire Legal Awards, Emma Permaine of Ridley & Hall was named Managing Partner of the Year.

Permaine was singled out as the leader of a local Yorkshire firm who has worked hard to look after staff since the outbreak of Covid-19. She is a real champion for women in the legal profession and the judges were pleased to be able to recognise her achievements with an award.

The Managing Partner of the Year win capped an excellent night for Ridley & Hall, which also took home the Family Law Award for doing great work across the board.

Trainee Solicitor of the Year, recognising the hard work and commitment required to excel in law, went to Danny Jacobson of Hawkswell Kilvington, who stood out as resourceful, down to earth and an asset to his firm.

The most prestigious award of the night, Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year, went to David Barraclough, who has joined the governing council of the Law Society of England and Wales.

The judges said that the immediate past president of the Yorkshire Union of Law Societies is a practitioner who, although retired, continues to contribute much to the profession in Leeds and Yorkshire.

Barraclough is a role model for the entire profession, a thoroughly welcoming and approachable person, and a committed fundraiser for a range of causes, including access to justice.

In his speech during the Yorkshire Legal Awards 2020 broadcast, Nicholas Emmerson, president of Leeds Law Society and chair of the independent judging panel, praised the entrants, finalists and winners for setting such a high standard.

He said: "Every single entry revealed that the state of the legal profession in Yorkshire is clearly strong and demonstrably resilient in these extraordinary times. Thank you to the members of the judging panel who surrendered their time to work with me to assess every entry."

Next year's Yorkshire Legal Awards will return to New Dock Hall in Leeds on 7 October 2021. Stay tuned for entry details and news of other exciting events dedicated to the legal profession in the region.

Yorkshire Legal Awards 2020 winners

Small Law Firm Award
Howard & Byrne

Medium Law Firm Award
Clarion

Large Law Firm Award
Stewarts

Employment Law Award
Consilia Legal

Banking & Finance Law Award
Devonshires

Regulatory & Compliance Award
Eversheds Sutherland

Residential Property Award
Banner Jones Solicitors

Commercial Property Award
Schofield Sweeney

Litigation & Dispute Resolution Award
Schofield Sweeney

Debt Recovery Award
Acclaim Credit Management and Recovery

Family Law Award
Ridley & Hall
Rising Star of the Year
Shanika Varga of Stowe Family Law

Diversity & Inclusion Award
Thrive Law

Private Client Award
Pervinder Kaur of Addleshaw Goddard

Niche Law Firm of the Year
FTA Law

Corporate & Commercial Award
Addleshaw Goddard

Criminal Law Award
Howard & Byrne

Chambers of the Year
Park Square Barristers

Trainee Solicitor of the Year
Danny Jacobson of Hawkswell Kilvington

Intellectual Property Award
Haseltine Lake Kempner

Partner of the Year
James McAulay of ABR Solicitors

Managing Partner of the Year
Emma Permaine of Ridley & Hall

Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year
David Barraclough

The Leeds Junior Lawyers Division elects its new committee

Kimberley Woodhead, chair of the Leeds JLD Committee for 2021, outlines who will lead the group this year and what it's planning

Non-profit organisation the Leeds Junior Lawyers Division (JLD), which represents more than 300 junior lawyers from across the legal community in Leeds and West Yorkshire, has elected its committee for 2021.

In December 2020, the Leeds JLD elected its new committee members and welcomed the following individuals: Haseenah Ali of Pinsent Masons (sponsorship officer), Danielle Hutchison of Ramsdens (media and publicity officer), Arooj Amer of Womble Bond Dickinson (secretary), Kate Imeson of Travlaw (sports officer), Jade Ferguson of Parklane Plowden (Bar officer) and Anna Schiavetta of Howarths (events officer).

However, it's not all change as current committee member Kimberley Woodhead of Wrigleys moves from vice chair to chair, and current secretary Ellie Stansfield of Blacks Solicitors moves to vice chair.

Kimberley has set a target for next year to strengthen the Leeds JLD's wellbeing offering, noting that "the past year has been a particularly tough one and has highlighted the importance of being connected with our peers and looking out for each other, but also of the need to look out for ourselves". The Leeds JLD aims to promote and support junior lawyers and their wellbeing further in 2021.

The past year

While the 2019/2020 year has presented challenges for the JLD, the organisation adapted to host many events virtually and received positive feedback from members. Sadly, the Winter Ball and Summer BBQ could not go ahead, and neither could many of the educational, sports and charity events. However, the events that did take place included: an annual launch party (with more than 100 lawyers and barristers in attendance), 'Paralegals in the legal sector', a regular book club, free fortnightly yoga, increasingly popular Zoom quizzes, and a very popular Christmas wreath making event.

The JLD embraced technology (not only Zoom!), which included a renovation of its website and an increase in followers for its Twitter (@LeedsJLD), Instagram and LinkedIn accounts.

It extended the Leeds JLD annual membership for an extra six months free of charge to ensure continuity, but also to make sure all junior lawyers could continue to benefit from the full 2020 calendar year, without the need for individuals and firms to consider membership renewals in the middle of an uncertain year. It is hoped that it won't be long until the JLD can bring back its traditional and much-loved events to its members. For now, it powers on with its ever-changing and unique virtual events.

The Leeds JLD committee thank the committee members stepping down this year for all their hard work and



dedication: Caroline Deathe (outgoing chair), Catherine Jarmola (national), Sanjit Kaur (sports), Megan Crowther (Var) and Rachael Wheatley (sponsorship).

To find out more about the Leeds JLD, please visit www.leedsjld.com.

The Leeds JLD Committee

Chair: Kimberley Woodhead (Wrigleys)

Secretary: Arooj Amer (Womble Bond Dickinson)

Vice chair: Ellie Stansfield (Blacks)

Treasurer: Samantha Patel (Weightmans)

Publicity: Danielle Hutchinson (Ramsdens)

Sponsorship: Haseenah Ali (Pinsent Masons)

Charity and education: Laurel Sleet (Wrigleys)

Sports: Kate Imeson (TravLaw)

Events: Elizabeth Russell (Gateleys) and Anna Schiavetta (Howarths)

FELT/in-house: Harvey Blake (Chadwick Lawrence)

Bar representative: Jade Ferguson (Parklane Plowden)

National representative: Sinead Frost (Weightmans)

Law society liaison: Kayleigh Watson (Walker Morris)

No sense of taste?

Patrick Walker retains his sense of smell, but taste is not quite so clear!



Patrick Walker is an independent mediator:
www.imediate.co.uk

Do your friends share cartoons and video clips intended to brighten the day or lighten the mood? I confess to finding some quite irritating. I am happy to see Donald Trump go but some of the goodbye messages seem to descend to his level.

But a clip caught my eye perhaps because it involved a law court and perhaps just because it had nothing to do with Covid. Counsel asks if the defendant explained why she had shot her husband. "Yes, she said it was because he had stepped on her freshly mopped kitchen floor." "But," continues counsel, "why did it take you over 20 minutes to arrest her?" Without hesitation, the officer responds, "the floor was still wet!"

Our kitchen floor is frequently wet from a constant cycle of wet muddy dogs and the

consequential clean-up. Happily, although the dogs may be mine, the floor is definitely not, and my role is limited to staying out of the way until the cleaning is finished. I would like to tell you I wait until it's dry, but the dogs don't so why should I?

With one enthusiastic bound and shake, the Labradors have recoated the cupboard doors, the oven and anything else less than about five feet high, with a fresh masterpiece from Jackson Pollock's brown era. Sometimes I am even accused of contributing to the mess, but I left my wellington boots outside, so I have no idea how the dogs' paws created those cleated tread patterns.

There are complaints about the smell too, but at least I can remind my other half that a keen sense of smell is a good indication that we have not yet been infected with Covid. Such symptoms were a topic of conversation during a recent Zoom meeting of Citroën 2CV owners (okay, yes, so it's a bit sad, but I am). One club member complained that smell and taste were closely related and that he had enjoyed no sense of taste since late March 2020. "That's terrible," responded another. "I suppose you've been out and bought a BMW."

This comment is not supposed to alienate BMW owners; they are fine motor cars with impeccable engineering and a host of innovative features. But it does reflect the love of simplicity which every 2CV owner has (or is perhaps forced upon him). Air-conditioning is a hinged flap below the windscreen and a roll-back roof. The doors lock and unlock with a key. The sat-nav is your passenger with a map. But all of this is strangely comforting, particularly in these uncertain times. I drive along with the feeling that, whatever happens, I will be able to keep her rolling with the box of spares and toolkit I keep in the boot.

Perhaps that is hopelessly optimistic, but I suspect the longer the pandemic continues, the more we will look for and value simple engineering, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and low carbon travel.

Or perhaps not—I can see Amazon man arriving. His van is belching diesel smoke and is the third to travel along this road in the last hour, but maybe, just maybe, he has brought our new robotic super-high-tech kitchen floor cleaner!



Promoting best practice and high professional standards



Amanda Simmonds, senior associate at Lupton Fawcett, is the new deputy worldwide chair of STEP

Congratulations on your election as deputy worldwide chair of STEP—how important are organisations such as STEP to setting global standards of practice?

I think they are incredibly important. STEP, in particular, is unique in that its membership spans a number of different professions and countries, and so provides a powerful platform from which to develop and promote best practice and high professional standards. Also, STEP has special interest groups such as the one for practitioners like me who specialise in family business advisory work.

It is fantastic to be connected to practitioners across the world who share a common interest, and to work together and learn from each other to find new and better ways of helping families plan for their futures.

What will your new role entail, and what are your plans for 2021?

As deputy chair, I will be working closely with my colleagues on the STEP worldwide board to lead the organisation as we embark on a new strategic plan. STEP's first 29 years have been characterised by rapid growth. As the organisation matures into its 30s, we want to build upon all that is good, while developing greater consistency and refining processes that will enable STEP to continue to grow at scale.

A big focus will be on strengthening STEP's educational offering and on demonstrating the importance and impact of what STEP and its members do, giving people a reason to engage with us and building greater global recognition. These steps to growth and impact will ensure we continue to represent the diverse needs of the membership, and continue to adapt and evolve to ensure STEP's ongoing relevance.

What are some of the challenges globally in this area of practice right now? Is the pandemic having a serious effect and how is STEP working to help?

One of the most interesting things about being involved with STEP is talking to fellow practitioners all over the world, and it is always striking how much we have in common when it comes to the challenges we are facing. As a general rule, common themes right across the world are ageing populations and associated issues, particularly in the area of mental capacity—encouraging people to plan for potential loss of capacity; working with vulnerable clients; preventing financial abuse, etc.

Ageing populations also throw up other issues, such as

around the succession of family businesses—when's the right time to hand over control to the next generation? How do you manage the generational divide? Similar issues come up within families more generally and estate planning has never been more essential.

Another key theme that is of relevance globally is technology: both in relation to people's estates, which now consist of a whole range of digital assets as well as the more traditional ones; but also in relation to how practitioners work. How we execute wills and powers of attorney, for example, is just one of the issues that has come into sharp focus in a number of jurisdictions during the Covid pandemic, as social distancing and shielding has made it very difficult to meet the legal requirements for witnessing a will.

In England and Wales, STEP was instrumental in the drive for, and the development of, new legislation temporarily enabling will execution by video conference. While this is very much something to be used as a last resort, it will be a huge relief to anyone who was forced to make a will in this way during the first lockdown, or who is trying to find a way to do so now. I led the working party that produced the guidance for STEP on this new legislation.

Appointments such as yours shine a light on the experience and expertise of Yorkshire-based private client lawyers—how would you describe the private client practice in Yorkshire right now, in terms of volume and quality of work?

One of the startling reminders for private client lawyers, and one that is relevant in Yorkshire, is that high-net-worth individuals, businessmen and women, landowners, and entrepreneurs will keep the market buoyant. Our role, as experts in private client law, remains to be one of continual education in terms of ensuring the public understand the need to use specialists to draft wills for them. The public needs to understand the benefits of making a will, estate planning, the probate process, inheritance tax rules, and the need for lasting powers of attorney, to ensure that those with more modest estates are equally protected as high-net-worth individuals and business people.

The list of skills that our Lupton Fawcett private client lawyers have is endless in terms of handling interpersonal relationships thoughtfully and empathetically, coupled with being personable and approachable. Our firm being recognised as a Platinum STEP Employer Partner means that all our private client solicitors receive ongoing training and development to reach the highest level of expertise in order to benefit our clients. Sadly, due to the pandemic, families are now realising the importance of protecting themselves and what they consider to be important.

This is a time to band together

Lisa Haythorne, president of Sheffield & District Law Society, on 2021's online events and keeping its community of members together



Here, in Sheffield and its districts, we have remained busy, keeping our members informed of the current climate in the legal world as well as our local area.

There is still a host of exciting developments within local firms, with movers and shakers aplenty across the Sheffield & District Law Society districts. Firms have adjusted exceptionally well to the 'new normal', which for many of us, now means working from home. These updates can be found in Sheffield & District Law Society's newsletter, *The Legal*, or on the website.

Unfortunately, some of the news we have needed to share with our members has been to inform them of events that have been cancelled over the past few months, but we have ultimately found that a lot of members, speakers and local businesses have developed new and innovative ways of continuing to grow business, communicate with clients and socialise with colleagues.

Sadly, due to the pandemic, we have made the difficult decision to cancel our 2021 Yorkshire Law Banquet and Awards that was due to take place in February, but we are already making plans for it to be bigger and better next year!

Our next project here at Sheffield & District Law Society is to plan for our annual membership renewals in April. These are now in line with our presidential year. We are hopeful this year will bring renewed interest in membership and provide firms and individuals with the opportunity to get involved with their local law society. We aim to provide a way to support each other in this close legal community and given the very isolated and worrying 2020 and start to 2021 we have all had so far, this is a time to band together and we hope that Sheffield & District Law Society can be a part of facilitating this.

As we make plans to increase our committee numbers, we

are also looking to re-establish our sub-committees. This will enable us to engage more with local firms on issues in their practice areas that are important to them. We hope to have plenty of interest from practitioners who want to share 'hot topics' within their specialisms, which we can then share with the Yorkshire Union, while providing support and a place to share best practice for our members.

We still also aim to hold the annual, Sheffield & District Law Society Awards, which we launched for the first time at last year's Yorkshire Law Banquet.

The awards proved to be a huge success with our members and brought a strong sense of community achievement as well as a little friendly rivalry to our traditional black tie dinner. It was a difficult job for the judges to pick just one winner from each category. All the entries had their own unique merits, and so this year, we aim to expand the categories to continue to help showcase the high level of talented and committed lawyers within our region.

This year we plan to hold the awards as a virtual ceremony due to the current lockdown restrictions and to make sure all our members and colleagues remain safe and well. We plan to make this a special event that gains plenty of interest and entrants.

We feel this is particularly important, especially at this time, when the local legal community needs and deserves the recognition and accolades for all their hard work and resilience during this unprecedented time.

Sheffield & District Law Society manager Liz French is currently working on the planning, delivery, design, capacity, and ticketing process before we launch the 2021 award categories and details to our members. As this will be the first time we have held an awards ceremony virtually, we are taking the time to make sure the event is as fun and interactive as it would be holding it in person, and remain very excited to be able to roll this out soon.

I was lucky enough to be a judge at the recent Yorkshire Legal Awards and really enjoyed the event. The standard of entry was breathtaking and it was hard to choose a winner from the pool of outstanding individuals and firms.

We continue to hold a number of online training sessions and will provide these free of charge to our members where possible. We are keen to hear from our members on what training they would like.

Virtual quizzes have proved to be the only social events that we can enjoy at this time and we have hosted two Zoom quizzes so far for our members. The last one was our famous Christmas Quiz, which included a prize for the best Christmas jumper. The competition was fierce and the entries so good that it made judging nearly impossible. We plan to host a spring or Easter virtual quiz and this time a prize will be awarded for best spring outfit or Easter bonnet!

Adaptability is key

Susie Mortonson, partner and head of the corporate and commercial department at Harrowells, on Covid-19's impact on activity, and caring for colleagues and clients

How are Harrowells and your colleagues adapting to the current circumstances?

We are all pretty much used to the pattern of remote working now after embracing the challenges presented by last year. Although it is frustrating to be back to not being able to see clients and contacts in person, we are faring well in this third lockdown.

The firm and department is busy overall and instructions continue to flow despite current circumstances, so we are grateful for a solid network of clients and professional contacts who continue to send work our way.

How is the corporate landscape faring in Yorkshire?

I think the most appropriate way to describe the corporate landscape at the best of times is a rollercoaster, so the last year has certainly lived up to that description! We went into the first lockdown with a strong pipeline but had a quiet spell with mergers and acquisitions (M&A) work over early summer as businesses were adapting to new ways of working and feeling the full effects of the first lockdown.

That soon changed and activity increased as clients began to realise that there were either great opportunities out there or it was time to plan an exit. I would say at the moment there has been no detrimental effect on M&A activity but the reasons behind the activity has changed somewhat.

The lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic together with Brexit uncertainty and an anticipation of future tax rate changes have all contributed to many clients' decisions to buy and sell businesses. We have probably received more sale instructions than purchases in the last six months, but I do not think that is solely due to the pandemic. We have also seen an increased amount of restructuring and reorganisation work from clients who are wishing to consolidate their businesses.

Thankfully, there is always a need for corporate advice no matter what the economic landscape and our adaptability to advise different businesses in all circumstances has paid off over the last year.

How have you had to adapt your own practice?

Resilience is a key factor in practising as a corporate lawyer because you never know what the next day, month or quarter will hold, or how the economic outlook may change. Again, that has come to the forefront over the last year and we have concentrated our efforts on ensuring that all of our clients know that we are there for them with the same quality of advice.

Having had to juggle home-schooling an elder child, looking after a toddler and doing my day job throughout a pandemic, my own personal resilience has come on leaps and bounds!

We always pride ourselves on being the 'trusted adviser' for all of our clients and would hope that

they would come to us for pragmatic commercial advice as well as targeted legal input. Many clients have utilised this expertise recently and openly engaged with us to request our thoughts on more strategic decisions that they are thinking of taking. Lots of clients have successfully diversified their businesses in order to adapt to current circumstances and we have adapted our form and content of advice accordingly.

What about Harrowells?

Most of our solicitors already practised some remote and/or agile working anyway but obviously it was a definite change to have the whole firm working from home on a permanent basis. Thankfully, we have a great management team and infrastructure in place to support this, so once we all got used to using Zoom and Microsoft Teams, it became a relatively normal working life.

We obviously all miss the social side of working alongside our colleagues and interacting with clients but I think that is the same for everyone. We put a lot of effort into making our offices Covid-secure after the first lockdown to enable staff and clients to attend in person again, so once we are out of this third lockdown then I anticipate that people will be pleased to be able to have that interaction again.

How much of a challenge has staff training and development been?

It is always hard to maintain appropriate training and development remotely and therefore of course it has been a challenge. Each department has put in place its own processes in order to ensure that each of our staff's development has remained effective. This includes regular virtual team meetings, feedback sessions and online internal and external seminars.

It has been particularly key to ensure that the more junior members of staff, including trainee solicitors, have felt as though their development has continued at the same level regardless of the pandemic. As training partner, I have regular check-ins with all the trainees and newly qualified solicitors across the firm and have undertaken to make sure that their career path has not been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Going forward, what do you think the legal profession in Yorkshire needs to do to support colleagues and clients during the current crisis and beyond?

I think now more than ever we all need to be understanding and sympathetic to the challenges faced by colleagues and clients alike. Whether it is cash flow, business continuity, staffing issues or home-schooling children, we all have a lot on our plate at the moment.



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