

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE 2007 -2008

It has been another busy year on many fronts for the society.

At a national level, the profession has suffered some serious blows from, inter alia, the introduction of HIPS and the crisis in public funding. Multi disciplinary firms are around the corner with the Law Society urging all firms to consider now the liberalisation of equity in 2010 or 2011 which some commentators suggest might have a significant impact even on the high street. As a committee we do our best to represent local views by way of responding to consultation papers (specifically on Accreditation Schemes and the Legal Complaints Service this year), organising local meetings to debate current issues and to take appropriate action to support our members such as the current advertising campaign to raise the profile of private client services at local firms. As will be evident from the notice calling the AGM we have arranged for the Director of the LPC at Swansea University to address members on the significant changes that will come about next year in the arrangements for the LPC and training contracts. These have not received wide publicity and we would urge members to attend the AGM to bring themselves up to date with how these changes will impact upon future recruitment programmes for their firms.

In accordance with our business plan we have continued to raise the profile of the profession through **charitable support**. The committee again chose the Swansea Charity Partnership as the charity that the society would support for the year. This decision, as last year, was based on a desire to support local, under funded charities. The partnership is a consortium of the following 7 local charities: Swansea Women's Aid, Swansea Community Farm, Longfields, Age Concern Swansea, Cyrenians, Cancer Information & Support Services and Local Aid for Children & Community Special Needs. Fund raising events have included a team running at the Swansea Bay 10k, raffles by the YSG and at the Annual Dinner. So far this year, a further £3,000 has been raised for the charity which in addition to the £5,000 donated last year has resulted in public acknowledgement for the society in the charity's literature and on its website.

The committee was pleased to present a revised **Business Plan** for the society at its AGM in 2007. Having achieved many of the objectives in its original plan, the new objectives are intended to move the society forward. This is particularly important given the changing nature of the profession and the additional pressures placed upon us year on year. The committee remains keen to ensure that the society offers services of real value to its members and welcomes feedback on this objective by way of formal or informal means. Some of the specific objectives set have been met this year including a reduction in subscription fees (as approved at the AGM) and closer links with the local YSG (recently re-named the Junior Lawyers Division). The local President of the JLD regularly attends our committee meetings in order to ensure that we have the views of the younger members of our profession and we are able to support each other's events and objectives.

Conscious of the accumulating surplus of funds discussed at the AGM in 2007, and in accordance with our new Business Plan we have made some progress with updating the society's **website** (www.swansealawsociety.co.uk) including the introduction of a free service for members that wish to advertise job vacancies. We have now outgrown the website in its current form and are researching suppliers and ideas for an upgrade to a more sophisticated service for our members using some of the surplus funds for this investment. The funds are also committed for the advertising campaign referred to above. The committee also considered a suggestion from one member to commit funds to a new legal scholarship for the benefit of local students. It was decided that the administration involved in such a scheme was not something that the society was able to sustain but instead would support and attempt to assist in raising the profile of the scholarships awarded by the Swansea Legal Charitable Foundation.

Our local programme of **Continuing Professional Development** remains popular and well supported by practitioners in Swansea and West Wales. Whilst this is an important source of income for the society (and we have this year achieved the objective set in our Business Plan of increasing turnover as shown in the final accounts that will be delivered at the AGM) the cost of courses remains very competitive for the benefit of our members. We remain committed to offering high quality but good value courses and we are always pleased to receive suggestions for topics to be included in our programme to ensure that we are offering what the profession needs. The committee would also wish to take this opportunity to thank Graham Kirby for his tireless assistance in helping to organise and drum up support for the conveyancing courses run to date.

This year's **social calendar** included the following

- The Annual Dinner at the Brangwyn Hall, always a highlight in the local professional calendar as well as our own and we were particularly pleased to welcome back a former colleague in David Mercer as our guest speaker at this event. We have since debated whether this dinner should revert to a lawyer only event but your views persuaded us that this would be a loss in many ways and so our Annual Dinner for 2008 will retain the lawyer and guest format but we have the option of organising a lawyer only event at another time in the year.
- The Presidents Drinks Party was again held at The Dragon Hotel with the format attracting some 150 attendees, many of whom were from the younger end of the profession.
- Walking – our incoming President is a fan and has already introduced some organised walks into our calendar. Not only does this count as a social event (and is definitely not a lawyer only occasion!) the aim is to raise sponsorship on the main challenge this year: the 3 Welsh Peaks; check the website for details.

The committee is sad to record the passing of the following this year: Alan Clason Thomas, John Lloyd and Derek Whittingham