

Society of Construction Law

Chairman's Annual Report 2004-2005

Overall

The past year has been successful for the Society on a number of fronts. Membership has risen to above 1700 for the first time. The financial position is sound. Core activities continue to be well-supported, both technical and social, and the Society's profile is high. Reviews are being actively conducted to ensure that this continues and improves. International links and contacts continue to grow.

Membership

Membership today stands at 1705, being some 1600 full members and the rest in the new category of Overseas E-members, who receive only electronic contact for a reduced subscription. This was introduced in the past year on the initiative of the International Sub-Committee, Keith Kirkwood and Chris Dering, with technical assistance from Web-master Edward Peters. Net increase of membership is about 50 per year.

Overseas links

In order to serve overseas members better and to strengthen links with organisations in other countries, the International Sub-Committee has set up a system of National Representatives, being members who have volunteered to act as first points of contact. Countries with National Representatives now include:

- France
- Greece
- South Africa
- Australia (Victoria) and (New South Wales)
- New Zealand
- Malaysia

SCL has close relationships with equivalent organisations in other countries, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and New Zealand.

Lectures and papers

During 2004-2005, 40 presentations have been given 13 in London and 27 in the regions. Papers have been given in Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham, Oxford, Derby/Notts, Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh and Cork. It is pleasing to see new regions opened up in Southampton by Marion Harris-Deans and in Liverpool by Dr. Peter Fenn. Alison Short is responsible for re-energising Cardiff as well. So far 15 papers from these presentations have been published and the Society receives great assistance from Frances Paterson who acts as editorial consultant in this process.

Other activities

A major initiative by SCL has been a study of ethics in construction. Peter Higgins has led a group studying this area and presentations have been given by John Uff, by Anthony Thornton and by Neil Stansbury of Transparency International.

The SCL Hudson Prize essay competition attracts a good quality international entry. This year, although no First Prize was awarded, Second Prize went to a previous winner, Adrian Baron of Melbourne, Australia. Commendations went to Matthew Molloy and Dr. Hamish Lal.

SCL is able to give support to a number of universities, with the purchase of law reports, journals, textbooks and forms of contract. Brian Gayton is co-ordinating liaison with academic institutions.

It is seen as vital that the Society connects with younger practitioners as well as the universities and Nick Gould, as well as being Secretary, has organised a number of well-supported events for Young SCL. This is an important area for further development.

The Advocacy programme continues to provide excellent training for solicitors developing their court-room skills. The Society owes a huge debt to His Honour Judge Humphrey Lloyd QC, who gives his services to the programme, and to Nerys Jefford and Nick Gould, who organise it.

Social events

The major Social Events of the SCL calendar start with the President's Reception. In October of last year the Society's 21st Birthday Party was held in the Ironmonger's Hall and all tickets were sold. Distinguished guests came from the senior ranks of the judiciary and the construction industry and its institutions. His Honour Judge Humphrey Lloyd was awarded the President's Medal by Lord Justice May for his large contribution to construction law. Honorary Memberships of the Society were conferred on Professor Phillip Capper and former Chairman Victoria Russell.

The Brewery Lunch, held at the Old Brewery in February, had the largest ever attendance, with nearly 400 members and guests. Phillip Capper was the speaker.

Chairman's Post-script

Gratitude is due to all Council Members including those standing down at this election for their past and continuing work on behalf of the Society. Special thanks are due to Richard Bayfield for standing in as Acting Vice-Chairman following Julie Forsyth's move to France.