

SOCIETY OF CONSTRUCTION LAW

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

Introduction

The Society has enjoyed another strong year. Membership stands at over 1800, at one point in the year reaching an all time high at over 2000 members. The financial position remains sound and there has been no increase in subscription rates.

There were this year 14 elected members of Council, together with 2 founder members and 4 co-optees. All members of Council have contributed to the running of the Society through its sub-committees. These sub-committees have maintained the Society's core activities including the speaker programmes and papers, other educational activities, social events and junior events. The Society simply would not function without the hard work of Council and I would like to express my thanks to all of them for their commitment and support.

Events at home

- **Speaker meetings and publications**

There have been 12 speaker meetings in London including two events held jointly with TECBAR, one jointly with the Society of Construction Arbitrators, and a special presentation in July 2007 by the BERR on the latest consultation on proposed amendments to the HGCRA 1996. There has been a change of team organising these meetings and I would like to thank John Burgess particularly for keeping the programme running during the "interregnum". We have made a small, but we hope, significant change to the reminder notices for these events to provide further information about speakers and topics and attendance has been on the increase.

The Society remains active in 13 regions, where 23 events have been held, some jointly with other organisations. The biennial Derby conference was held in November 2007 and the annual Leeds conference in March 2008. Both were great successes. The Society's thanks go to all the regional co-ordinators for their hard work. Support for and encouragement of events in the regions remains a key consideration for the SCL Council. I have chaired or spoken at events in Birmingham, Derby and Leeds, and many of the regional events were supported by other SCL Councillors and Officers, but we are always keen to do more.

Since May 2007, 24 papers have been published (8 printed and the balance currently available online), all with the much appreciated assistance of Frances Paterson and Philip Britton.

The Hudson Prize was won for the second year running by Julian Bailey. Trevor Thomas's paper was highly commended and Shy Jackson's commended. Thanks go to the judging panel chaired by Anthony Lavers.

- **Other activities**

The Advocacy Training Programme for solicitors ran again successfully during November/December 2007. Mr Justice Ramsey and Mr Justice Coulson (as he now

is) generously gave up their evenings to act as the judges, and administration and training was undertaken by Hamish Lal, Vicky Lee and me. We plan to continue to run this course annually.

Through the efforts of the sub-committee of Nicholas Gould, Richard Bailey and Hamish Lal, Junior SCL goes from strength to strength. This is an important aspect of the Society's work in promoting knowledge and understanding of construction law, as well as introducing members to the construction law community. This year's events included the Introduction to Basics course at King's College, the annual boat trip, a Christmas speaker meeting with drinks, and site visits.

- **Social events**

The annual Brewery lunch, as always expertly organised by Barry Milton, was a sell-out with a record 650 tickets being sold. Sandi Toksvig was the guest speaker and amused us all with her witty and polished words, despite being hidden behind a large lectern. For the first time, a room was arranged for drinks after the lunch. In a tribute to the success and conviviality of the event, more members than we could have imagined stayed.

There were enjoyable Christmas drinks with TECBAR following the joint meeting in December.

The 2008 Annual Dinner promises a high attendance, musical entertainment and possibly even sunshine.

International

A major focus of activities this year has been, and continues to be, the planning and organisation of the second International SCL Conference, to be held in London between 5 and 7 October 2008. This involves a vast and ongoing commitment from the Organising Committee who hope that the end result will be an excellent and well-attended conference.

The conference is supported by the European Society of Construction Law and the SCLs in Hong Kong, Singapore, KL and Selangor, the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand and Mauritius. Nicholas Gould and Keith Kirkwood, in particular, have worked to establish better communication with other SCLs and to encourage and support the establishment of international SCLs. This year has seen the establishment of a new international SCL in Mauritius, and plans and proposals have been made for the establishment of SCLs in countries as diverse as Nigeria, the Bahamas and Australia.

The organisation of this conference has also led to a productive relationship with the American College of Construction Lawyers who will be participating in the conference and offering an additional conference session.

The European Society of Construction Law annual conference was held in Prague in September 2007. Anthony Lavers and Barry Milton attended on behalf of the Society and SCL member, Sarah Hannaford QC, presented a paper. The next meeting is in Athens in September 2008.

Other activities

The University Grants sub-committee of Anthony Lavers, Hamish Lal and Peter Phillippo have kept up the efforts of the previous year in establishing links with universities and awarding university grants. As a result over £14,000 had been donated in academic grants and awards by last year's end.

A major review of the website has been undertaken and members consulted on their use of and views about the website. A new website is in the course of construction and will be tested and launched later in the year.

We are sorry to lose from Council this year, Peter Higgins, a long serving and dedicated Councillor who has led and directed the Society's work on ethics. The results of the work so far were discussed at the London speaker meeting in September 2007. We will be considering Peter's successor as Ethics Champion.

Farewells

The Society lost this year founder member, Alan Shilston, and long-standing member, Harold Crowter. Obituaries were published in the Newsletter and our sympathies sent to their families. In addition, Alan's paper on "The Obligation to Co-operate" was re-published.

Administration

The Society continues to be ably assisted by Jackie Morris and Frances Whitehead, as administrators, Edward Peters as webmaster and Simon Hogg as postman. All put in great efforts with real enthusiasm and we are grateful to them.

Nerys Jefford QC
Chairman

14 May 2008