

SCL UK AGM – Chair’s report

The last year has been a rather quiet year for events. Nevertheless, the SCL continued to provide a number of events for our members, and towards the end of the year we started to resume in person events, and moved our webinars to hybrid lectures. Here is an update on the activities of the Society over the past 12 months.

Astra

During the past year, the Astra sub-committee has continued to organise and host its popular series of “*Introduction to...*” online talks, on a diverse range of subjects. For example, geotechnical and seismic engineering, delay analysis, standard forms of contract, and termination. The sub-committee is now focussing on the organisation of in person events, including the next Astra international conference which will take place in Paris this Autumn, as well as continuing the “*Introduction to ...*” series.

Educational Webinars and Seminars

This year we held 27 webinars to include joint events with TeCSA, Tecbar and the Society of Construction Arbitrators. The webinars were organised by London and the various SCL regions, and when restrictions were lifted we also held our talks in person. In addition, the Ireland Conference, the Construction Advocacy Course and the Spring Conference in Leeds all went ahead this year.

Equality and Diversity

The main update is our Diversity Pledge which applies to all representatives undertaking selective roles at the SCL. The SCL is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our membership and eliminating unlawful discrimination from all of the SCL's activities.

We are also monitoring for diversity on a voluntary basis (membership and representatives, including speakers) to keep an eye on how we are doing.

We have also launched a mentoring programme across the SCL membership.

Hudson Prize

The Judging Panel of the SCL Hudson Prize awarded the First Prize to Dr Matthew Bell, Associate Professor and Co-Director of Studies for Construction Law at the University of Melbourne for his paper titled “*Contract Damages for Defective Construction Work: An Unsolved Puzzle?*”.

European SCL

The ESCL Annual Congress was scheduled for October 2020 in Sofia. It has been postponed until 16-18 June 2022, when it will be hosted by Adriana Spassova, the President of the Bulgarian SCL and a graduate of the King’s College MSc. During the lockdown period a number of on-line seminars have been presented by ESCL given approximately monthly by members of different European SCLs. So far, as the UK SCL’s contribution to ESCL is concerned, our main activity has been; (i) as a Jury Member (as they call the Judging Panel) for the 2021 Masters Thesis Prize competition, which was won by a candidate from the University of Copenhagen; and (ii) as a member of the Committee setting up the new Essay Prize competition, which will be competed for the first time in 2022, based loosely on the Hudson Prize. Professor Anthony Lavers will be giving a presentation on behalf of SCL UK at the Sofia Conference.

International SCL – excluding Europe

No new SCLs have been established in the last 12 months although many groups around the world have shown interest, and the necessary criteria has been forwarded. Active support is ongoing with groups in Bangladesh, Jordan, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia.

SCL Council members have spoken at SCL conferences (some inaugural) in Korea, Vietnam and Turkey. It is hoped that Israel soon will have its inaugural conference.

The SCL International Conference in Auckland was hit badly by the New Zealand Covid lockdown rules changing, affecting those who could attend. Nevertheless, a highly successful virtual conference was achieved, and many who could not attend viewed recordings of the speakers.

The 2023 SCL International Conference will be in Istanbul. Support is being given to their organising committee. The date will be established soon.

IT and Social Media

Our new website is up and running. It is now easier for members to book events and search for papers.

Membership

The SCL currently has 3,330 members from 76 different countries. 2,790 UK members, and 540 overseas members.

Papers

Since last year's AGM we have published 8 papers. Special thanks go to our editor Joanna Howard for her sterling work editing and publishing our papers.

Social

I am glad to report that we resumed our social events. We held our summer networking drinks on the 5th of August at The Yacht London Upper Deck at Temple Pier. The Dublin Lunch took place on 26 November 2021, and we held our most successful Annual London Lunch to date at the Grosvenor House Hotel on 11 February 2022.

University Liaison and Grants

11 SCL prizes were funded at 7 UK Universities: (University of Ulster, University of Cambridge, University of Portsmouth, King's College London, University of Cardiff, University of Salford, and the University of Central Lancashire). The average prize is £250, and prizes are awarded for high performance in an examination, or other assessment related to Construction Law.

In addition, the University of Ulster received a grant of £4,900 for construction law texts, and BAILII received a grant of £3,000 to continue its service publishing court judgments and other resources.

The Frances Paterson Scholarship Fund has continued to support doctoral research in construction law subjects at UK universities: Awards are currently held by Ph.D students at Darwin College Cambridge, at the University of the West of England Bristol, at Liverpool John Moores University, and at King's College London. A further award will be made for 2022, which will be announced shortly.

Conclusion

My thanks go to all of the Society's members and the staff involved with the running of the Society, which would be unable to function without their hard work and dedication.