

Background

1. In December 2009, the Council approved the budget and Business Plans for the Law Society for 2010. In so doing, the Council agreed a series of five goals to be achieved within a three-year time period:
 - The public regards solicitors as the first, natural choice for legal advice and assistance above all other providers;
 - Business at home and around the world views solicitors qualified in England and Wales as the pre-eminent legal advisers and trusted business partners, with English law as the jurisdiction of choice for contracts and dispute resolution;
 - Policy makers and the public view the Society as a leading and trusted authority on all legal issues and a significant leader in civil society;
 - The government and the profession's regulators view the Society as the authentic voice of the entire profession;
 - Solicitors consider the Society to be the most important representative organisation for them, delivering relevant practical support throughout their careers and a leading voice on the business of law.
2. As the figurehead of the Society, the President – with support from the other officeholders – is responsible for driving this programme forward in collaboration with the Chief Executive. In particular, the role of the President is to:
 - Promote solicitors to stakeholders and the public;
 - Promote the Society to its members; and
 - Oversee the corporate and financial health of the Society.
3. The Presidential year plan constitutes an outline of the structure of the forthcoming Presidential year.

Purpose of plan

4. The Presidential year plan is developed to:
 - Enable the leadership of the Society to act as the voice of the profession, supporting solicitors;
 - Secure the support and participation of the Council, boards and committees in the delivery of the messages of the plan;
 - Support the delivery of the Society's strategic objectives, and business plan developed by the Council, boards and committees;
 - Bring coherence to the Society's communications, so that each message is related to and reinforces key themes;
 - Provide continuity, development and progress towards medium to long-term policy objectives; and
 - Reinforce the thought leadership of the Society.
5. The Presidential year plan is not - and cannot be - a comprehensive synopsis of every area to be covered during the Presidential year. It is instead an outline of the unique activity that the President will undertake on a planned basis. The President will continue to lead the response to ad hoc events and developments

as they arise with the assistance of the Council, whether or not they feature in the Presidential Year Plan.

6. The 2010-11 Presidential year will take place within the context of significant developments in both politics and the profession.

Government and Parliament

7. A general election took place on 6 May, resulting in a new government. A host of new faces are likely to emerge in positions of power and influence. It will be the role of the incoming President to meet the key Ministers personally over the period leading up to Christmas 2010.
8. Due to the large number of MPs standing down at the general election and the swing away from the previous governing party, there will be a large proportion of new MPs in the new Parliament. Given the churn in Parliamentarians and the prevalence of MPs with little or no experience of government, it is especially necessary to powerfully reinforce perceptions of the vital role played by solicitors in the life of the country.

Economic impact

9. The economic environment is likely to remain difficult during 2010-11. This stands to have a continuing adverse impact on solicitors' businesses. It is especially important that the Society promotes the work of solicitors and the value of the services that they offer in such a period. It is likewise essential that members receive the support that they require to maximise their business prospects, to market themselves and, if necessary, to exit the market.

Access to Justice & Conveyancing

10. The incoming Government will face a tight fiscal situation. As a consequence, it is unlikely to be sympathetic to significant increases in fees or the scope of legal aid. The Society's comprehensive review of access to justice will reach fruition over the course of 2010-11. It will form an essential plank of the Society's thought-leadership platform and a focus for political engagement over access to justice.
11. The incoming government will be faced with the challenge of acting upon Lord Justice Jackson's recommendations on civil justice costs.
12. Conveyancing solicitors are likely to face another difficult year. In addition to the continuing fall-out from the recession, there could be additional issues arising around increased use of technology, problems of identity fraud, mortgage fraud and competition from other providers who will attempt to squeeze solicitors out of the market. The Society needs to champion the solicitor as the client's friend in a market where the consumer is beset by adverse and competing interests.

Regulation

13. The SRA has set an ambitious target to complete the transition to outcomes-focussed regulation by mid-2011. As the approved regulator, the Society needs to continue to encourage this transition and to oversee its successful implementation.

14. The Legal Services Board has set a target date of 6 October 2011 for the first ABS to begin trading. The licensing arrangements for ABS are to be resolved during 2010-11. The challenge for the Society is to define the circumstances in which ABS can offer particular services, to identify conflicts of interest and to draw discussion over the details of licensing rules to a conclusion whereby access to justice is secured and the public is protected.
15. The SRA finds itself in increasing competition with other regulators. There are significant differences between the rules of the Society and those of the Bar and the Council for Licensed Conveyancers. A level playing field must be created to prevent practitioners moving between regulators to take advantage of more relaxed rules.

Solicitors – Adding Value, Qualified To Answer

16. To meet the challenges of the environment faced by the Society and by solicitors in 2010-11, the theme of the Presidential year will be *"Solicitors– adding value, qualified to answer"*. Its central tenets will be:
 - To celebrate the value that solicitors deliver to their clients, their employers and to society;
 - To ensure that solicitors and the solicitors' profession are adequately equipped to continue to provide such value; and
 - To demonstrate the value of solicitors to the country and to the maintenance of Britain's global influence.

These tenets will be encapsulated by three headings:

- Promoting the brand;
- Facing the future; and
- Building Britain.

Promoting the brand

Objective: To promote and to bolster the brand of solicitor at a time of increased competition; to celebrate and demonstrate the value of solicitors to the general public and to society; and to place solicitors at the heart of government and good governance in the minds of the public and politicians.

Message	Aim	Audience
The brand of "solicitor" is a hallmark of quality, integrity and expertise.	To maintain the positive profile of the solicitors' profession, to advertise the variety of the work that solicitors do and to differentiate solicitors from other providers of legal services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Wider profession • Government • Parliament • Consumer bodies
Solicitors empower individual members of society.	To advertise the value that solicitors add by virtue of the services that they offer; to emphasise that a solicitor is worth the cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public

Solicitors are central to good governance	To raise the profile of solicitors in central and local government and to raise the profile of the Society among solicitors in local and central government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament • Solicitors in central and local government
Solicitors sit at the heart of their communities	To emphasise the pro bono contribution of solicitors and the value of professional skills outside their professional life in a voluntary or community capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government • Parliament • Public
Solicitors are trained for life, not just for practise	To demonstrate the versatility of a solicitor's training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiring and current students & trainee solicitors • Public •
Hiring a solicitor is a guarantee of security – anything else is a risk	To raise awareness of the ethical standards of the profession and the safeguards and protections in place to protect the client.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Government • Consumer bodies • Insurers

Facing the Future

Objective: To support solicitors and to bolster the capacity of the profession to deliver value to clients, employers, society, community and country, both now and in the future.

Message	Aim	Audience
The Law Society is the guardian of the strength of the 'solicitor' brand.	To protect the brand of solicitor, to protect the reputation of the profession and to assist solicitors to execute their duties to the best effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All solicitors • SRA and LSB • Consumer organisations
The Law Society offers the profession the assistance and support that it needs to develop and compete in the post-Legal Services Act market and to encourage the growth of diverse and flourishing businesses.	To lead the profession in developing robust business models and practices; to drive development and take-up of Society business development tools; to clarify and strengthen membership services offered both to members and the wider legal services market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private practice

The Law Society is committed to delivering a regulatory system which delivers access to justice and value for money.	To assist and oversee a regulatory settlement between the SRA, the Legal Services Board and the profession and the implementation of outcomes-focussed regulation; to secure ABS licensing arrangements which preserve access to justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All solicitors • Wider legal profession • Legal Services Board
The Law Society is committed to preserving a system of training that meets the needs of solicitors, now and in the future.	To deliver a compelling training and accreditation offering which equips solicitors to meet the evolving function of solicitors in the new decade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private practice solicitors; • In-house solicitors; • Local government solicitors
To be successful in the new legal market, the profession must be representative of the society it serves.	To reward and advertise best practice on equality and diversity; to build on the success of the Diversity and Inclusion Charter and accompanying protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All solicitors
Solicitors are under-represented in the judiciary which leads to misunderstanding within the judiciary of the way that solicitors work and perpetuates a myth that the appointments process is biased against solicitors.	To encourage greater numbers of high quality applications from solicitors for judicial office, leading to an increase in solicitor judicial appointments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All solicitors • JAC • Judiciary

Building Britain

Aim: To illustrate the degree to which solicitors provide the building blocks for a healthy, functioning society, whether by supporting the economy, ensuring good governance or promoting and protecting the brand of Britain overseas, as businessmen, brand leaders or diplomatic and military advisers.

Message	Aim	Audience
Solicitors make a major contribution to the UK economy, both directly and indirectly.	To advertise and demonstrate solicitors' contribution to the economy, whether in terms of fees, business advice, market opening activity and the attractiveness of England and Wales as a jurisdiction of choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City; • Government & political stakeholders.

Solicitors play a critical role in opening new markets, for business as well as themselves.	To secure recognition of the importance of solicitors in opening new and open markets; to build political acceptance of the need for a benign regulatory environment to assist solicitors in this task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City; • Private practice; • Regulatory bodies; • Government & political stakeholders.
Solicitors are central to the success of UK commerce.	To raise the profile of the in-house profession and to support them in their evolving function at the heart of the companies they serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house lawyers.
The professional services in England and Wales are global leaders in their fields. Government and regulatory bodies must do all that they can to preserve this pre-eminence.	To build great cooperation and collaboration between the UK professional services to make the case for better regulation and support from Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional services bodies; • Government and political stakeholders; • Regulators.
Solicitors protect The 'brand of Britain' by representing the nation in overseas jurisdictions and assisting the authorities and the military in the fulfilment of the global responsibilities.	To develop appreciation for the association between the brands of English and Welsh law firms operating overseas and the brand of the nation; to highlight the work of lawyers in the military and in the foreign and diplomatic services to ensure that Britain abides by the law, thus protecting the reputation of the nation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Forces legal services • Government legal service

Vehicles

17. The President will deliver on these objectives using a range of vehicles, including:

- A comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy including a wide range of consumer organisations and other professional bodies to nurture and strengthen links and to bolster the profession's reputation as a friend of the consumer;
- Engagement between professional bodies to create a more coordinated and focussed approach to promoting and defending the role of the professions;
- A new and continuing programme of thought leadership events to nurture and nourish the Society's burgeoning reputation as a crucible of ideas;
- Regular contact with senior figures in government and Parliament from Westminster, Whitehall, Wales and the EU;
- Use of the Society's policy resource and underlying expertise to tackle issues from which other institutions have shied away, as it has with regulation,

- access to justice and home buying;
- The conveyancing scheme
 - The Jackson and Access to Justice reports currently in development
 - The annual solicitor brand promotion campaign
 - The development of a suite of membership services and products which meet the needs of a modern profession; and
 - Advice from the profession and beyond, to be sought from time to time as appropriate.

Measurement

18. The officeholders will track the delivery of these messages over the course of the Presidential year on a monthly basis and will report back to the Council accordingly.