

Howdy Partner!



We are very pleased to announce that Siân Hopkin was made a Partner of Powells, on the 1st of January 2006.

Although born in the Midlands, Siân was brought up in Wales. She attended the University College of Wales in Cardiff where she read Law and Economics.

Having been admitted as a Solicitor, Siân worked in a City firm and then a Lincoln's Inn firm before moving to the West Country in 1991.

Siân joined Powells in March 2003. She specialises in family matters such as divorce, financial disputes between married and unmarried couples, children cases and disputes following the breakdown of civil partnerships.

Siân is the only solicitor in Weston who is a qualified mediator, having qualified in 1993 with the Family Mediators Association. She is a member of the Bristol Family Mediators Association, Resolution (formerly the Solicitors Family Law Association) and the UK College of Family Mediators. She has been fully involved in the development of mediation as a way of solving family disputes, especially since it has been covered by Legal Aid, making it more accessible.

Although Siân is what is known as a golf widow, she plays tennis and swims regularly.

Clean Neighbourhoods

The Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 introduces a range of new powers for local government and the Environment Agency. These include the power to issue fixed penalty notices to businesses that fail to produce waste transfer notes, to waste carriers that fail to produce their registration details or evidence they do not need to be registered, and for waste left out on the streets by businesses. It also reforms the recycling credits scheme to provide increased local flexibility to incentivise more sustainable waste management.

The Act enables Local Authorities to keep the receipts from such penalties.



we keep you informed

TUPE – Protection of Employment

The new Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations 2006 will come into force on 6 April. The rules relate to employees' rights when the firm they work for is transferred to a new owner. They aim to afford greater protection to staff, but also to simplify the regime and reduce costs for businesses. For more information call Glyn Evans on 01934 637 211 or evans@powellslaw.com.

Bankruptcy law overhaul?

An overhaul of bankruptcy law is being considered by the Trade and Industry Secretary, following an in-depth investigation into the current set-up. Recommended changes would see a distinction drawn between business and personal bankruptcy.

For advice on all aspects of insolvency, Powells has its own bankruptcy expert, Paul Addison. He can be contacted on 01934 637 906 or addison@powellslaw.com.

HMR&C Minimum Wage crackdown

Small businesses that are failing to comply with the National Minimum Wage Act could face criminal prosecution. Cash-based enterprises, including catering and hospitality, will be the particular focus of investigation. The main rate for workers aged 22 and over is currently set at £5.05 an hour.

Issue 14, April 2006

This newsletter is a service provided by Powells Solicitors. All information is correct at time of going to press.

Hair today, gone tomorrow

It has taken a long time for the question to come to court of whether cutting off someone's hair against his or her will could amount to actual bodily harm (*DPP vs Smith (Michael)* The Times, 19 January 2006). The justices in this case decided that there was no case to answer, on the grounds

that hair growing from the head was by its nature dead. However, the hearing will continue after it was thrown back by the Court of Appeal. In this case, the allegation is that the snipping was done out of revenge but, in the past, it has usually been the sexual fetishists who have ended up in court!

Equality Bill 2006

On March 13th 2006 the Trade and Industry Secretary unveiled a consultation paper which will be introduced this October under the Equality Act 2006. The Equality Bill aims to offer protection under law from discrimination, on the basis of race, gender, religious belief and sexual orientation within the goods and services sector, which is afforded to all other members of society.

Lawyers from firms and barristers' chambers that have a poor track record on equality could miss

out on judicial roles and silk status, a leading barrister has warned. A Law Society spokesman said: "It is important that all solicitors and law firms promote equality and diversity. We support moves to widen the diversity of the judiciary, and candidates for judicial positions should be able to demonstrate their personal commitment to promoting equality and diversity. However, we would be concerned if a solicitor faced being penalised for any short-comings of their firm over which the individual had no control".

What a Star

Have you heard our ad on Star 107.7 FM? What do you think? Write or email Bobby Ferrari at ferrari@powellslaw.com with your name, email

address and most importantly your comments by 30th April 2006 and we will pick one of them at random to win a bottle of bubbly!

Brothel Keeping

New Government plan to permit small brothels

The law could be changed to allow two prostitutes and a receptionist or maid to work together legally in brothels, the government has confirmed. Currently only lone prostitutes can offer sex from flats or other premises without breaking the law.

Launching the new prostitution strategy for England and Wales, minister Fiona Mactaggart said that working in groups would be safer for women. "There is no evidence that decriminalisation or licensing prostitution would achieve our objectives of reducing exploitation, improving the safety of those involved and making local communities safer". But she said prostitution would not be eradicated "overnight" and evidence from sex workers suggested allowing them to work in pairs off the street increased their personal safety.

"Where women are working for themselves and are less likely to be managed or pimped on a large scale, in the interim it is probably more sensible not to use the very serious penalties we have against people who run brothels," she said.

The Home Office plans include tougher rules for men who buy sex, and action against those who exploit prostitutes, such as people traffickers.

Staff Focus

Robyn Rowland



After qualifying in July last year, Robyn worked with a firm in Newport as a criminal law

advocate. Relocating to the Bristol area, he has now joined the Crime team here at Powells.

Robyn is a keen supporter of rugby, particularly Cardiff and Wales. Other than standing on windy terraces, he enjoys reading, music and the theatre, as well as the occasional long walk when dragged off the sofa.

New Website

Have you seen our new website yet? Please do visit it at www.powellslaw.com and email Becky Sage with your comments, we'd love to know what you think! rsage@powellslaw.com.

we keep you informed online @ www.powellslaw.com

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