

Legal firms expect increase in work

IN BRIEF

SCOTTISH law firms are hoping for new streams of work from the changes likely to result from the Smith Commission on further devolved powers.

Alistair Morris, president of the Law Society of Scotland, told its 'The People's Verdict – so what now?' conference in Edinburgh he had little doubt the yes vote would have generated a significant deal of work and the demand for advice both from government, companies and individual clients perhaps on a scale not seen for a long time.

"But we were repeatedly told a no vote was not a vote for the status quo," he said. "We were promised change – significant change. And it is now for us to hold the political leaders to account for the promises that they made.

"With the devolution commission now set up and being led by Lord Smith there is, quite rightly, huge pressure on pro-union parties to deliver significant new powers from Westminster to Holyrood.

"Yes there is still disagreement between parties in terms of what the final package of reforms should look like and there is much work to do if a consensus is to be reached. However, there is also significant overlap between the different party proposals so we



Alistair Morris

can expect further devolution and significant new financial responsibilities and tax-raising powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

"This makes it likely Scotland will, and can, take a different path on taxation with greater divergence in lawmaking changing the arrangements in the north and south and providing an even greater need for clear and expert advice from our profession."

Martin Sales, partner at law firm DWF, said some lawyers saw opportunities in the effects of constitutional change. "DWF predicted early on that such change in Scotland was inevitable, whichever way the vote went," he said. "Even before the vows were given by the Better Together Campaign, we identified that enhanced devolution would mean greater divergence from the UK position for Scottish business in key areas, with the result

that specific advice would be required from Scottish lawyers."

Christine O'Neill, chairman of law firm Brodies, said the flow of good quality work for lawyers depended much less on the particular constitutional arrangements and much more on whether the underlying economic and regulatory conditions supported commercial and public sector clients who are doing business in Scotland.

"We've already seen an incredibly busy year in 2014, unaffected by the result on September 18. Our real estate team has had its busiest 12 months ever and that activity continued through August. We know some deals were put on hold, but others were completing so, if anything, we expect autumn will be an even more active time. Corporate and finance deals have followed a similar pattern." ■

UKCS report reveals findings

INVESTMENT of around £30bn is expected in the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) on decommissioning North Sea oil and gas projects by 2040 according to a new report.

The report, prepared by Decom North Sea and Scottish Enterprise in partnership with Arup, highlights a number of key areas including talent attraction, innovation and contracting/procurement strategies.

Scottish Enterprise international sector head for oil and gas David Rennie said: "This report identifies key capacity constraints and we will continue to work closely with Decom North Sea and industry to help develop capacity and raise awareness of these and other opportunities to meet our decommissioning needs." ■

Craft brewers visit Canada & US

A DELEGATION of Scottish craft brewers has visited North America on a learning journey led by Scottish Development International – the first of its kind for this sector.

Ten companies took part in a five-day visit taking in Boston before heading on to Toronto in Canada. The trip included visits to Harpoon Brewery and Samuel Adams in Boston; meetings with retailers, distributors and importers, the US Craft Brewers Association, and a meeting with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario in Toronto – the largest buyer of alcohol in Canada. The group also attended the Ontario Craft Brewers' third annual conference in Toronto. ■

Scottish Business Exhibition

Jim McColl is a keynote speaker at the Scottish Business Exhibition and NewStart Scotland at Glasgow's SECC on November 13 and 14 (www.thescottishbusinessexhibition.com). ■

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"SSE firmly believes it has a responsibility to contribute to the societies in which it operates. Paying the appropriate amount of tax is core to this; and we are determined to abide by both the spirit and letter of the UK's tax regulations."

Alistair Phillips-Davies, chief executive of SSE, on the news the Perth-based utility has become the first FTSE100 company to be awarded the Fair Tax Mark.

Book review

Title: Insider Secrets of Public Speaking
Writers: Nadine Dereza and Ian Hawkins
Publisher: Rethink Press
Price: £14.99

Dereza, an award-winning journalist and TV presenter who has hosted a number of *Insider* events, covers a range of aspects of public speaking in the book, which was co-written with Ian Hawkins.

The format uses 50 questions to tackle subjects from handling obnoxious audience members to

whether you should always open with a joke. Their answers are thoughtful, informed and sensibly give a certain amount of flexibility.

In my view there are no absolutes in public speaking and though they advise not using a script one of the best speeches I ever experienced was 'read' by Max Hastings. ■



Rating out of five: ★ ★ ★ ★