

THE SOUTH EASTERN CIRCUIT BAR MESS

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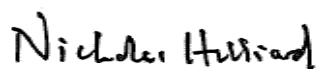
Dear Member of the Circuit,

On 8th December 2010, I was elected as the next Leader of the Circuit and my term of office begins on 1st January 2011. I want to take the earliest opportunity to update you about some current topics.

1. A team under the leadership of Sarah Forshaw Q.C. is preparing a response to the Green Paper on the reform of legal aid in family, civil and criminal proceedings.
2. Alongside that, we will be making the case against the implementation of any One Case One Fee scheme. I am wholly opposed on public interest grounds to any such scheme and I do not think that its imposition is inevitable.
3. The Legal Services Board has said that a scheme for quality assurance of criminal advocates must be in place by July 2011. Any new scheme will have to go beyond the current disciplinary arrangements for inadequate professional performance. I anticipate that a grading system of some kind will be involved. We are working to influence the proposals for the best.
4. The CPS are going to introduce a grading system for prosecution work. We have made suggestions for improvements to the scheme. The application process will probably begin in January 2011. Applications of this kind are very familiar to all those who have applied for Silk, to sit as Recorders or who took part in the grading exercise for CPS London. I cannot stress enough the need to expend time and effort in these applications. I know it is a burden, but time spent in preparation is the best way of avoiding subsequent disappointment.

So far as the Circuit is concerned, I will endeavour to keep you informed about what is going on. I will do everything I can on your behalf to the best of my ability. I welcome any offers of help. In turn, I am available to help any of you.

Best Wishes,



Nicholas Hilliard Q.C.