



BAR COUNCIL NEWS UPDATE – MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2018

Chair of the Bar - Interview

[The Gazette](#) – Following last week's interview with The Gazette, Max Walters writes:

Andrew Walker QC cuts an equable figure. Yet, like many barristers, he is increasingly exasperated by what seems like a concerted effort to undermine the non-negotiable traditions that underpin the bar's success – and its longevity.

Defending the bar's modus operandi is likely to define its new chair's year in office, much as it defined those of his recent predecessors.

Speaking to the Gazette last week, Walker said: "In answer to people who say the chambers model is old-fashioned, I'd say it's clearly remained strong and remained strong for a reason.

"If you have two professions, with one focused on advocacy, you want and need a structure to identify that advocate. The moment you do anything corporate you take away a huge part of that because of potential conflicts. There's no easy way around that and it's why the chambers model has remained the model of choice."

Women QCs

[The Guardian](#) has profiled four women barristers – Amanda Weston, Sonali Naik, Brenda Campbell and Clare Wade - from Garden Court Chambers who will take silk in February, and explores the barriers and challenges they faced to become QCs.

Sam Mercer, head of equality and diversity at the Bar Council, acknowledges there are problems at QC level. "We must find out why it is that ethnic minority barristers are less likely to succeed, and we need to work harder to get more women to apply," she said. "If we exclude under-represented groups from the top ranks, it means we are failing to benefit from their excellence."

Amanda Weston said: "I hope our appointment as silks will send out an encouraging message to non-traditional applicants. It's great that someone like me can make an impact at the bar, but it is worrying that just at the point we are celebrating diversity, the practical obstacles to the bar for people from my background are getting worse."

Anti-money laundering

New Law Journal - Barristers present a 'very low risk' when it comes to money laundering and should not have to pay fees for an Office for Professional Body Anti Money Laundering Supervision (OPBAS), the Bar Council has argued.

In a robust response to the Financial Conduct Authority's proposal that barristers pay fees towards the proposed regulatory body, the council points out that 'there are no historic examples in the public domain of barristers engaging in money laundering or terrorist financing activities on behalf of their clients'.

HMCTS consultation

[Politics Home](#) - The surprise announcement of plans for yet more court closures has prompted concerns from the Bar over how much harder it may become for vulnerable people to access their local court, and whether the drive to cut costs will impact the quality of our system of justice.

Chair of the Bar, Andrew Walker QC, has responded to the Government consultation, [Fit for the future: transforming the Court and Tribunal Estate](#), published yesterday.

He said: "This unexpected plan to shut down another eight courts across England, including two in London, is the second raft of court closures initiated by the Government in as many years.

"The plans inevitably will give rise to concerns about how much harder it may become, particularly for vulnerable people, to access their local court."

HMCTS court spending and closures

[The Guardian](#) - The courts service spent £50m last year on agency and contract staff, a more than tenfold rise since 2010 when it spent less than £4m, while courts have been closing at an unprecedented rate.

The annual cost of temporary staff has rocketed over a period when the Ministry of Justice has suffered the deepest cuts of any Whitehall department and closed more than 220 courts across England and Wales.

Last week the MoJ revealed that a further eight courts had been earmarked for sale. These are Wandsworth county court and Blackfriars crown court in London, and magistrates courts in Cambridge, Northallerton, Banbury, Maidenhead, Chorley and Fleetwood.

Andrew Walker QC, the chair of the Bar Council, which represents barristers in England and Wales, said: "In light of the scale and pace of change, there are real concerns about the cumulative impact. If we are to ensure that we maintain effective access to local courts, then these further proposals must not be assessed in isolation."

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"The very best and the brightest in the profession must be recognised, whatever their background," says Sam Mercer, #BarCouncil head of #Equality & #diversity in @guardian



'I began my career as a single mum': female QCs changing the face of law
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theguardian.com

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7



13





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Fit for the Future? Bar Council responds to HMCTS plans for court closures
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Sounds like a fantastic idea - great to see this has already helped [#students](#) to obtain mini-pupillages. [@MartinSLewis](#) please get in touch and put students forward for our [#socialmobility](#) initiatives such as Bar Placement Week - details here barcouncil.org.uk/careers/opport ...

Martin Lewis ✓ [@MartinSLewis](#)

Know an under 18 wannabe lawyer who doesn't have contacts. I'm patron of a new charity, the Social Mobility Biz Partnership.

It aims to level the playing field so those without privileged backgrounds get...

2:41 PM - 19 Jan 2016

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12



10

