**Year-End Presidential Report: Plymouth Law Society**

As we close another remarkable year, I am delighted to reflect on the achievements, milestones, and initiatives of PLS. This year has been a testament to our collective commitment to advancing the legal profession, championing key issues, and fostering a supportive and inclusive community.

**Key Initiatives and Events**

**1. Training and Development:**

* **Trauma Awareness Training:** Recognising the importance of understanding trauma in the practice of law, Rebecca hosted an in-depth training session in January 2024 that equipped our members with the tools and insights needed to provide empathetic and effective representation.
* **Deaf Awareness Training:** Accessibility and inclusivity are central to our mission. This training, provided in September 2024 by staff and students from Exeter Deaf Academy helped raise awareness and provided practical skills to enhance communication with D/deaf clients and colleagues.

**2. Distinguished Guest Events:**

* **Private dinner discussion with the SRA board:** We engaged in open and frank discussion with the SRA about their consumer protection review and ensured that PLS members were represented and heard.
* **National Law Society virtual roundtable meetings:** We have attended these regularly throughout the year, discussing topics such as delivering and paying for a sustainable compensation fund, and ensured that PLS members were represented and heard.
* **Open Conversation with the National Law Society President:** We were honoured to host Nick Emmerson during his reign as National Law Society President for a thought-provoking discussion on the future of legal aid, and to showcase the Law Clinic. This event underscored the challenges and opportunities ahead and emphasised the importance of advocacy in ensuring equitable access to legal services.
* **Mayflower Lecture delivered by the Lady Chief Justice:** The Lady Chief Justice shared her perspectives on the critical role of enforcement in creating an accessible and accountable legal profession at the hugely successful Mayflower Lecture. Her insights sparked valuable dialogue among our members and stakeholders on enacting just and equal laws - enforcement and fair trial, and the feedback received informally has been positive. This is a huge event in the PLS calendar and is proving to be a bigger success year on year. I wasn’t at all sure that Lady Hale could be paralleled, and then I met Dame Sue…

**3. Community Engagement:**

* **University of Plymouth graduation:** We attended the graduation ceremony in July 2024 to present The Plymouth Law Society Vocational Law Prize, and to celebrate the achievements of the future generation of lawyers.
* **DASLS, Cornwall, and Bristol Law Society dinners:** We have attended these through the year and strengthened our working relationships with each regional society. There is real scope for collaboration across the Southwest, especially across Devon, and we have joined with DASLS to launch the Championing Client Experience Excellence programme with Insight6.
* **New Sponsor –** **Insight6:** We are working with Insight6 to really understand what it is that our members want from us, and to narrow the gap between what we think they want and what they actually want from membership. This involves quarterly feedback, and ad hoc feedback after significant events. This is a new initiative and will require ongoing support and encouragement from committee members to ensure that PLS members and those attending our events do give us their feedback.
* **Engagement with local secondary schools:** We have hosted local students at the Law Clinic with an interest in the law and engaged them in discussion with the National Law Society President about the future of AI. We will continue with this engagement and aim to host a range of local students, in particular those who are interested in the law but may feel such a career is not open to them, to generate increased awareness of the Law Clinic and to help those students begin to develop their network and make connections.
* **Support for the University of Plymouth’s WBL programme:** As a society we have supported this scheme and encouraged our member firms to engage and support the next generation of lawyers.
* **Collaborations with the Chartered Institute of Insurers:** Strengthening inter-professional relationships, we engaged with the Chartered Institute of Insurers to discuss shared objectives and opportunities for collaboration.
* **Managing Partner Forum & Next Gen Forum:** We have successfully relaunched the MP forum, and we are developing a Next Gen Forum in collaboration with our partners to ensure a continuous relationship and to ensure that our next gen equity partners, for example, are fully aware of the products available to them when considering this step. This also allows NQ lawyers to build their professional network with key, mutually beneficial contacts.
* **Annual Dinner:** This year’s dinner, held again at The Box, proved to be another success and the feedback received through Insight6 though limited, was hugely positive.
* **PLS Carol Service:** This year’s reading was delivered by Jenny and was pleasingly well attended. Attendance at the carol service seems to be increasing year on year, which must be lovely for Anthony to see.

**Advocacy and Key Themes**

This year, we focused on several vital themes:

* **Social Mobility:** We continued to champion initiatives that break down barriers to entry and advancement within the legal profession.
* **Legal Aid and Access to Justice:** Our efforts, highlighted by the National Law Society President’s visit, reinforced our commitment to ensuring that legal aid remains a cornerstone of justice.
* **Women in Law:** We celebrated and promoted the achievements of women in the legal profession, emphasising the importance of diversity and gender equity.

**Fundraising and Charitable Impact**

One of the most heartwarming achievements this year has been raising over £6,000 for our three chosen charities:

* **Young Devon:** Supporting young people to thrive and overcome challenges.
* **Trevi Women:** Providing crucial support and empowerment for women in need.
* **Promoting Children in Plymouth:** Advocating for and enriching the lives of children in our community.

**Representational Engagement**

Attending the annual dinners of the Cornwall, Bristol, and Devon & Somerset Law Societies allowed us to build stronger ties within the regional legal community. These occasions were invaluable opportunities to share ideas, celebrate successes, and strengthen our shared commitment to the profession’s future.

**Looking Ahead**

As we move into the new year, I am filled with optimism and determination to continue building on this year’s achievements. Together, we will persist in our efforts to promote social mobility, enhance access to justice, and uphold the values that make our profession indispensable to society, and throw our collective support behind Jenny as she continues to raise the profile of our wonderful city and our fabulous committee. I have no doubt that she will be a remarkable President and has a brilliant year ahead of her, for which she has my full support.

Thank you for your unwavering support, dedication, enthusiasm, and patience. It has been an honour to serve as your president this year.

Warm regards,

Carrie Laws

PLS President 2024/2025

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