



# Corporate Plan 2011-12

## Introduction

This is the third annual corporate plan to be published by the Law Society of Scotland which sets out a clear plan of activity for the Society during the course of 2011/12.

This plan differs from our previous two in that we now have a new strategy which guides all our work. This strategy was agreed by our Council following considerable work during the winter and spring of 2010/11 and grew out of work from previous planning discussions. We started by thinking about the political, legal, social and economic contexts in which the profession will operate in the coming years. The new strategy now provides us with a clear road map when planning our activities for the coming year.

This corporate plan seeks to build on our strategy and provides more detail in terms of our key activities over the coming 12 months. It also gives an insight into the inter-connected strands of work that all our teams will contribute during the coming year.

Our *Towards 2020* strategy is available to members and the public. In producing it, we created a new overarching aim for the Society -

### ***To lead and support a successful, respected Scottish legal profession***

This clear and succinct goal covers the many obligations placed on us by statutes and the many interests of our increasingly diverse profession. In working to achieve this aim, we will ensure that:

- high professional standards are met and maintained amongst the membership
- the quality of legal services delivered by our members is assured and continually improved
- we provide excellent business services, training and support to our members

We believe we can achieve this aim by meeting five key objectives, which cover the reputation, integrity and professional standards of our members as well as define aspirational goals for the Society and our staff.

## Our strategic objectives:

1. Excellent solicitor professionalism and reputation
2. Our members are trusted advisers of choice
3. Our members are economically active and sustainable
4. The Society is the professional body and regulator of choice
5. The Society is a high-performing organisation

In producing this corporate plan, our various teams used the high-level goals contained in the 2020 strategy to formulate departmental and organisational plans. In doing so, we gave consideration to what, when and how we would deliver within each area of the organisation. This has all helped to underline the cross-organisation working that is essential to the success in meeting our goals.

We gave careful consideration as to how we could measure and demonstrate progress towards meeting our key objectives. This is an ongoing programme of work that the senior management team and I are developing and we will be reporting progress to the Society's board on a monthly basis.

I hope you find this corporate plan interesting. Importantly, I hope it provides you with a helpful insight to the varied work of the Society and how that work can lead and support a successful, respected Scottish legal profession over the coming year.



Lorna Jack  
Chief Executive

September 2011

## 1. Excellent solicitor professionalism and reputation

*For the profession to be successful and respected, it must demonstrate its professionalism through standards that are consistently higher than any of its potential competitors. That professionalism must also be on at least an equal footing with other respected professions. We know that our reputation is determined by the world outside and must be earned. Therefore, not only must we improve the standards to which solicitors work, but also increase the understanding and appreciation of those standards among the public.*

Our success in meeting this objective can be demonstrated by:

- the perception of solicitors' clients, stakeholders and the general public towards the profession as a whole
- maintaining and enhancing the professional standards of our members, reflected in the numbers of complaints upheld against solicitors
- improving public perception of the rigour of disciplinary proceedings, with the Scottish Solicitors' Discipline Tribunal and Scottish Legal Complaints Commission having a primary role
- solicitors maintaining their market share in the provision of legal services

In working to achieve this objective throughout 2011/12, we will:

- move forward with the authorisation of providers of trainee continuing professional development
- monitor and quality control *all* accredited providers
- ensure we support members' needs by strengthening and restructuring our professional practice team
- maintain a quality programme of direct engagement with members through our conferences, visits to local faculties and bar associations as well as other events
- enhance our links with government as well as other relevant organisations to ensure the interests of the profession and public are considered in key decision-making processes
- make further enhancements to our website, with a particular focus on the provision of online training
- work to embed the consolidated practice rules and accounts rules as agreed by members in 2011
- build up our capacity for research to increase our knowledge and understanding and to back up our negotiations
- ensure the work of the Society and wider profession is reported widely and accurately through better engagement with print, online and broadcast media
- undertake a new programme aimed at promoting the solicitor profession to schools and undergraduates

## 2. Our members are trusted advisers of choice

*We are ambitious for our members and want them to succeed, whatever their chosen sector or market. To that end, we want their professional qualification to not only be recognised and valued but to be seen as the premier qualification in any given circumstance. This applies to individuals working in private practice or members operating inside private companies or the public sector. We want to create an environment that means whatever the problem requiring a legal solution, a Scottish solicitor is chosen to provide that solution. That might be a member of the public buying a house or setting up their will; it might be a large corporate choosing a firm of legal advisers or an individual as their general counsel. It might equally be a decision to employ someone as a prosecutor or to choose someone to fill a senior risk management role. A Scottish solicitor should be the obvious choice.*

Our success in meeting this objective can be demonstrated by:

- the results of surveys which reflect the opinion of stakeholders, the general public and partner organisations towards the profession
- the success of individual solicitors and firms in relevant fields of work
- positive feedback from clients and the wider public
- solicitors maintaining pre-eminence in the delivery of regulated legal services

In working to achieve this objective throughout 2011/12, we will:

- ensure the interests of solicitors are considered in decision-making processes by supporting our various committees in their input into government through consultation responses and discussions with political decision makers
- contribute to working parties and inquiries where relevant
- maintain and enhance our programme of training events including practice management courses, solicitor advocate training, courses for our in-house solicitor members as well as faculty and firm events
- use the outcomes of work aimed at quantifying the reputation of the solicitor profession amongst the general public to produce an action plan which seeks to protect and enhance this reputation

### 3. Our members are economically active and sustainable

*Although not the only measure of achievement, economic success is vital to our members. A number of firms have ceased trading over recent years, not through a lack of legal knowledge or skill but from a failed business practice or because of the wider economic backdrop. Similarly, we know the economic downturn, coupled with reductions to public sector budgets, has impacted many of our employed status solicitors, whether in-house or working in private practice. We could not sustain a membership which was in large part economically inactive. A successful legal profession must have, not just deep legal knowledge, but increasing business acumen. That is why we must support firms to ensure they are economically sustainable. We must also support individual members, not only to gain or retain employment, but to ensure their skills are utilised within their chosen workplace and to greatest effect.*

Our success in meeting this objective can be demonstrated by:

- the growing revenues and profitability of firms
- the successful introduction and licensing of new legal services providers
- a reduction in the number of unemployed solicitors and the retention of newly qualified solicitors
- the financial viability of the profession as measured through our Cost of Time survey
- the annual salary survey of employed solicitors

In working to achieve this objective throughout 2011/12, we will:

- take forward our work to develop a regulatory scheme with a view to regulating licensed legal services providers (LP) in 2012
- take forward a programme of events that is relevant for high street, mid-size and larger firms and provides practical business support
- enhance our support for trainees, new lawyers and unemployed solicitors, including specialist training courses developed for online delivery
- develop our relationships with Scotland's principal business organisations to ensure the economic value of the profession is better understood and supported

## 4. The Society is the professional body and regulator of choice

*The reform of the legal services market in Scotland will bring more choice, not only for consumers but also for those thinking of a career in legal services too. If we are focused on a successful and respected profession then we need to ensure the brightest and the best individuals choose to enter the Scottish solicitors' profession and choose the Law Society of Scotland as their professional body. Equally, as the licensing regime for legal providers opens up and competition emerges in terms of who might regulate such entities, we must aim to be the regulator that is chosen by those who would seek to provide legal services to the highest professional standards.*

Our success in meeting this objective can be demonstrated by:

- maintaining and increasing the numbers of Society members
- the efficient introduction of a LP regulatory scheme
- the licensing of a realistic share of the available market of LPs as they emerge
- growth in the numbers of Law Society of Scotland registered paralegals

In working to achieve this objective throughout 2011/12, we will:

- introduce the consolidated practice rules and new accounts rules, following final approval from the Scottish Government and OFT
- complete an appropriate regulatory scheme and successfully apply for regulator status for LPs once government has announced its criteria for regulators
- promote the benefits to firms and staff of the Society's Registered Paralegal Scheme
- complete the In-House Lawyers' Group review and take forward work aimed at enhancing the services we provide to employed solicitors
- maintain regular and high-quality communications with our members through the re-launched *Journal* and a more targeted programme of online communications
- work to reach all parts of the profession and in all parts of Scotland through conferences, faculty visits and other events, allowing for greater face-to-face engagement

## 5. The Society is a high-performing organisation

*A successful and respected profession needs to be led and supported by an organisation which sets itself the highest standards of performance. Whether through our ruling Council, our regulatory and non-regulatory committees or our staff, we must be an efficient and effective organisation, which seeks to continually improve the quality and value of our work.*

Our success in meeting this objective can be demonstrated by:

- meeting key performance indicators and setting up business 'dashboards' for regular monitoring of performance
- the effective delivery of key projects and the completion of tasks
- staff retention and career development of colleagues
- improved scores in the Great Places to Work staff survey
- the results of surveys amongst our members and stakeholders, focusing on their perception of the organisation and the satisfaction with our services and support
- an improved financial performance through better financial delivery to forecast, the growth of non-subscription incomes and the maintenance of reserves at an appropriate level
- effective resolution of the final salary pension scheme liabilities in agreement with the scheme's trustees
- further efficiency and cost savings across the business

In working to achieve this objective throughout 2011/12, we will:

- continue the development of our internal reporting mechanisms
- introduce new management information 'dashboards' for our overall business as well as individual teams and departments
- provide dedicated training for all our staff and continue our management development programme
- take forward an action plan designed to address issues identified in the results of the Great Places to Work survey
- complete an investigation into buy-out options for the final salary pension scheme in consultation with the pension trustees
- further develop and roll out planned iMIS-related process improvements into all areas of the business
- review our portfolio of publications and bring forward recommendations to our Board for cost reduction and income generation
- improve our call-handling procedures and resource management
- invest in robust IT platforms, business continuity and disaster recovery planning
- implement a new constitution, should that be approved by members
- embed the work of our new Regulatory Committee
- complete the work that followed recommendations from the working party on remuneration for Council members and conveners
- build on our new programme of training and induction for new Council and committee members