



Law Society
of Scotland

Leading Legal Excellence

Enabling the recovery of a resilient, high
quality and trusted legal profession.



Assure



Support



Excel



Influence



Evolve





Foreword

The Law Society has a unique role in Scotland. We are a key regulator that sets and enforces standards for a profession which helps people in need. We support and care for our hard-working members. We provide a voice that represents our members and wider society when it speaks out on human rights and the rule of law. We are an influencer on changes to legislation and the operation of our justice system. We also work with our schools and universities on legal education.

This role is constantly evolving. It is why our 'leading legal excellence' strategy, published in 2015, was a prospectus for change in the organisation. Over the last five years, that change has been realised.

We have seen numbers of Scottish solicitors rise to record levels. Our membership has been opened to new and bigger groups of other legal professionals, such as accredited paralegals, legal technologists and Law Society fellows. Our student associate scheme was launched and has been a tremendous success.

We moved from our long-standing offices at Drumsheugh Gardens to our new home at Atria One, with fit for purpose accommodation for our staff team, our Council and hundreds of committee volunteers.

We have also changed our work to respond to new and emerging issues, particularly around technology, reform of our courts and on equality, diversity and wellbeing in the profession.

In thinking beyond 2020, our view was that the core elements of 'leading legal excellence' remained as relevant today as they did when our strategy was agreed in 2015. Work was progressing well to refresh and update our strategy to ensure it was effective and relevant for the years to come. However, like every individual, every business, every organisation, none of us imagined how events would force our thinking to change so radically and so quickly.

Like every part of society, the global spread of COVID 19 has impacted the legal sector and the solicitor profession deeply. For the Law Society, we worked to act quickly in response, with an unprecedented package of financial support for our members, coupled with a major recast of our work.

It has also inevitably required change to the approach we had been undertaking on our updated strategy. Given the level of uncertainty which currently exists, coupled with limits on our own finances from our proactive decision to reduce fees, our Council agreed it would be inappropriate to agree a new five-year plan. We have instead chosen to create a shorter two-year strategy that takes us to the end of 2022 and creates space for us to consider our longer-term ambitions and plans.

This new and updated strategy, whilst shorter in life than originally envisaged, seeks to keep the organisation centred on our important core responsibilities. However, we know the challenge of COVID 19 means our work to support and sustain recovery in the profession will require strong focus over the months and years to come.

It is why we have worked hard to ensure this document strikes an important balance. A strategy which responds to the huge socio-economic challenge of the here-and-now but also maintains focus on other big issues facing our members and the clients they serve. We believe this two-year plan strikes that balance and we look forward to working with our members and our stakeholders in taking this important work forward.

With best wishes



Amanda Millar
President



Lorna Jack
Chief Executive

About this strategy

The purpose of this strategy is two-fold. It aims to provide a clear strategic purpose for the work of our staff and volunteers over the next two years. It also aims to give a clear picture to our members, stakeholders and the wider public of our priority areas for the period ahead.

Our first 'leading legal excellence' strategy ran from 2015-2020. It adopted a different structure, a new tone and higher ambition for the Law Society compared to the document which went before. When we began to think about our work from 2020 onwards, a consensus quickly emerged within our Council that the core elements of 'leading legal excellence' were as relevant in 2020 as they were in 2015. However, whilst the strategy had served the Law Society well, we needed to update and refresh our strategic framework. It had to reflect the new priorities which had arisen over the last five years as well as the emerging challenges.

Our initial plan was to complete that refresh and publish a revised five-year strategy for the start of our 2020/21 operating year. However, the dramatic events of 2020 required us to change our approach. The spread of COVID 19, an abrupt halt to much of the economy, shifts in both working practice and the operation of the justice sector meant our Council agreed it more appropriate to publish a shorter two-year plan. This recognised the huge social and economic uncertainty facing the country and the difficulty in assessing the longer-term outlook with confidence. It also recognised the changed financial position underpinning the Law Society, particularly

with our decision to temporarily reduce core solicitor practising fees. However, even as we move to this interim two-year strategy, we need to recognise just how fluid the current situation is. This means our approach must be flexible enough to accommodate and adapt to changing circumstances.

We are continuing to structure our strategy across five areas: Assure, Support, Excel, Influence, and Evolve. Our strategic aims under each area reflect our distinct and varied responsibilities as well as the broad range of people who depend on us and our work.

It is also important to us that we are as open and transparent as possible in delivering this strategy. It is why we will continue our practice of publishing an operating plan each year. This will make clear the projects and areas of activity we will prioritise. We will report our progress in delivering that plan to our Board and our Council each month and publish a full account of our performance as usual and as part of our annual report.

We now aim to publish a new five-year strategy in 2022.



The context for this strategy

As we prepared to create an updated five-year strategy, we undertook significant engagement and research in 2019 and the early part of 2020.

We consulted widely within and outwith the profession on the key principles which needed to underpin our strategic thinking. We listened carefully and sought to better understand the changes happening in the legal sector and in society more widely. This provided us with wider knowledge to understand the context for our work over the years to come and the backdrop to which our objectives had to be set.

Much of that context has inevitably changed due to the spread of COVID 19 and the political and economic response to it. However, a great deal of this insight work and the conclusions we drew remains valid for this shorter interim strategy. We also offered everyone who had contributed to the original consultation the opportunity to feed into our updated thinking about the impact of COVID 19, which we have reflected on in developing this document.

The economic context

Within just a few short months, Scotland and the rest of the UK have gone from small but steady rates of economic growth to the largest and deepest recession ever recorded. Current economic forecasts are burdened by huge uncertainty given the dependence on effective action to curb the spread of the virus, the development of vaccines and therapeutics, and movement and distancing restrictions needed to keep people safe.

Pre-COVID 19, the country was benefiting from historically high levels of employment. However, that picture is changing dramatically and is likely to worsen when job retention schemes and support packages unwind or are phased out.

The unemployment rate has been more pronounced in Scotland than in other parts of the UK, which some attribute to the exposure of the Scottish economy to the oil and gas downturn and a bigger dependence on tourism jobs. The Fraser of Allander Institute says it expects to see more substantial increases in unemployment and warns that those who become unemployed will experience a very challenging economy in which to find new work. The Scottish Chambers of Commerce has warned that the young and lowest paid are likely to be impacted disproportionately.

Inflation is expected to continue to fall below the Bank of England's target. This means interest rates are likely to stay at historically low levels.

All this economic turbulence is inevitably impacting the legal sector, which has used the government furlough scheme and other support mechanisms extensively. We must prepare for redundancies, both in solicitor and non-solicitor roles, although early evidence suggests a strong appetite for people to retain their professional qualification even when they are without paid employment.



The sectoral context

The legal services market in Scotland is changing. Over recent years, global law firms have merged with established Scottish practices. Despite record numbers of Scottish solicitors, there has been significant consolidation in terms of the number of solicitor firms. There has been a general decline in the number of traditional partnerships and sole practitioners although we have seen a rise in sole practitioner numbers in the period since COVID 19. The number of solicitors working in-house has substantially increased. We expect these trends to continue.

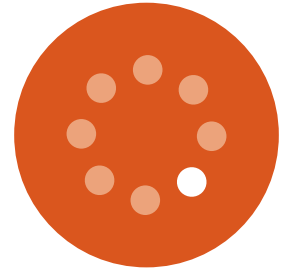
The speed of technological change and innovation in the legal services market has been rapid and will continue. The increased availability of technology offers new opportunities and greater efficiency. Equally, there are concerns around issues like cyber security, ethics and digital poverty. Technology will likely create new roles in the legal sector but also put some traditional roles and established income models at risk.

The Scottish legal sector is more competitive than ever before. Against that backdrop, the badge of Scottish solicitor will need to continue to be seen as a mark of excellence, both at home and internationally. This runs from a robust route to qualification through to high standards of practice and effective public protections for when things go wrong.

Substantial strains remain in the legal sector in terms of access to justice and legal aid provision. This vitally important part of the profession has long faced pressures from real-term cuts to fees and a complicated and bureaucratic system of remuneration. Pro-bono advice and law clinics provide an important service but will not replace formal professional legal advice where it is needed.

The percentage of the profession made up of in-house solicitors, both public and private sector, is expected to continue to grow. This reflects the changing requirements of companies and organisations and the increasing attractiveness of these roles for practising solicitors. However, the dual pressures of strained public finances and the need for private sector financial efficiency means in-house solicitors will be expected to do more with less.

Global connectivity and new technology means the important role of solicitors in identifying and reporting money laundering and other forms of fraud will become even greater than now. The UK Government is also likely to expect the profession to make a greater financial contribution to the systems in place to monitor and tackle economic crime.



The social context

Social attitudes are changing rapidly. Recent years have brought an increased focus on the importance of the legal profession looking like the society it serves. Whilst diversity has improved markedly, significant barriers remain and will need to be addressed.



Scotland was one of the very first legal jurisdictions to become majority female. Looking at the demographics of those studying to become solicitors, this is likely to become more pronounced. However, female solicitors only hold about 30% of partnership positions. Similarly, whilst our research indicates that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) solicitor numbers are broadly in line with the Scottish population, there are issues around career progression which need addressed. That focus on equality and diversity must also consider issues such as disability, social mobility and sexual orientation.

COVID 19 is accelerating changing attitudes to the importance of good mental health at home and in the workplace. Wellbeing and creating an effective work-life balance will be increasingly important for employees and employers. That is coupled with substantially different ways of doing business, with flexible and remote working likely to become the norm rather than the exception.

An increased focus on climate change will inevitably impact on businesses and individuals, as we strive to make more sustainable choices. There is ever greater pressure, particularly from younger generations, on governments at all levels to act on environmental issues. There is an increasing priority placed on climate action in public and private sector procurement and there is likely to be greater investment in climate measures and diversification away from fossil fuels.

The political context

Scotland and the UK continue to have a highly polarised political environment. The relationship between the Scottish and UK Governments, made up of differing political parties and viewpoints, can be fragile and often strained.



Nevertheless, both governments and parliaments have shown an openness and willingness to engage with civic society when pursuing reform. This creates opportunities to influence public policy decision making. At a time when new questions are being asked, those with solid arguments and clear evidence have an opportunity to shape the answers.

The 2021 Scottish Parliament elections will set the political foundation for the lifetime of this strategy. The outcome of that election is also likely to influence the decisions of the Scottish and UK Governments on a possible referendum on the issue of Scottish independence. The Law Society played a leading, non-partisan role in the 2014 referendum and would want to undertake a similar position in any new vote.

The capacity of government and parliament to address some issues and pursue certain areas of reform will inevitably be limited as ministers and parliamentarians rightly focus on the country's economic recovery. This may impact on reform to the regulation of legal services and much needed simplification to legal aid. However, we expect there to be a continued political focus on reform to the justice system, fuelled by the need to recover from the response to COVID 19, both in terms of civil and criminal justice.

Our cross cutting themes

There are three words which feature throughout this strategy: technology, equality and resilience.



In creating this two-year plan, we identified these critical themes which span our different strategic objectives. They reflect the feedback which we received from the profession and our stakeholders, both in our early strategy work but also during the economic crisis which followed the spread of COVID 19.

These issues around equality, technology and resilience do not fit into any one single area. They must run as threads throughout our strategy and our work over the next two years.

Our cross cutting themes



Technology



Equality



Resilience

Technology

Technology is transforming the legal sector. The use of artificial intelligence and digital solutions are allowing legal firms to deliver services in new and innovative ways. Online platforms are empowering consumers in their buying choices. The digitalisation of our courts is driving changes in practice, presenting opportunities and challenges in equal measure. As this transformation proceeds, we need to work with justice partners to ensure justice is accessible to everyone and the digital poor are not left out. We also know that technology will create exciting new job opportunities and specialisms in the legal sector but will also put some other traditional roles and methods under pressure.

As the professional body of Scottish solicitors, it is important that we help to lead the conversation on the use of technology in the legal sector. It will be important to help firms who need support to invest in and make best use of digital infrastructure, recognising that some are inevitably more advanced in the use of technology than others. Our regulatory responsibilities mean we must also ensure clients remain protected in what could be very different ways of delivering and receiving legal services.

As a business in our own right, the Law Society must also embrace the opportunity which technology offers us to be more effective, more efficient and more accessible. It will be increasingly important to adopt a 'digital first' approach in our work.

More widely, we recognise the importance of technology in helping the legal sector lessen or even eliminate its environmental impacts. Even with the current focus on recovering from COVID 19, the Law Society and the legal profession must play its part in changing to help create a sustainable future for the generations to come.

Our cross cutting themes



Technology



Equality



Resilience

Equality

The Scottish legal profession must reflect the diversity of the society it seeks to serve. It needs to be accessible to anyone with drive and talent regardless of their background. When people do join the legal profession, we want them to have a long and fulfilling career.

Creating a more equal and diverse legal profession is not just the right thing to do – it makes good business sense. Diversity of backgrounds, diversity of thought, diversity of views all contribute to more viable and sustainable companies and sectors.

The Scottish solicitor profession is increasingly diverse but there is still much more to do. The important gains made when the organisation was formed in 1949 remain fragile and are arguably at greater risk due to implications of COVID 19.

Whilst the majority of the profession is female, the progression of women to more senior roles remains a challenge. This is underlined by the 20% gender pay gap and the fact so many talented women leave the profession never to return. This is even more important considering the evidence showing that the economic and social consequences of COVID 19 are more likely to impact more heavily on women.

Solicitors want a profession which is welcoming, inclusive and where discrimination of any kind is confronted. This includes a zero-tolerance approach to cases of bullying and harassment. Those with disabilities need to also be confident their employers will provide the facilities and make the adjustments they need.

As we seek to change attitudes and drive forward change, we want to work in partnership with others. This includes The Glass Network, the Scottish Ethnic Minority Lawyers' Association and Women in Law Scotland. We also want to collaborate with government and our educational institutions to address the barriers at schools and universities which can impact on those from lower income groups from going on to enter the profession.

In leading this change, we need to be a champion of equality and diversity within our own organisation. As an employer, we need to adopt best practice and be open to challenge. Equally, we want to ensure our committee membership is rich with diversity and that our processes ensure anyone can contribute to our work.

Our cross cutting themes



Technology



Equality



Resilience

Resilience

Few could have predicted the dramatic events which would arise from the global pandemic. It forced large sections of our economy to come to a halt. It resulted in necessary limits on some of the basic freedoms we all take for granted. It challenged our educational institutions and has required government intervention on a scale not seen since World War 2.

For the legal sector, the impact was sudden and stark. The vast majority of court business was suspended. The property market all but ceased and took considerable time to restart. Substantial elements of commercial and private client work were postponed or cancelled. Hundreds of solicitors were furloughed and traineeships were deferred.

As a professional body, we worked hard to help the profession recover from the financial crisis in 2008. However, we need to be realistic about the scale of the challenge facing the legal sector now. It will require the Law Society to prioritise our activity carefully over the next two years so we support the sector's recovery. This needs to cover our regulatory work, our member services and our influencing of others. We also need to develop our insight into the financial health of the profession and constantly update our data on the impact of the downturn.

This work is needed to create long-term resilience for businesses and individuals. We are particularly conscious of a generation of trainees and newly qualified solicitors who may find it difficult to secure employment due to the downturn and a lack of vacancies. These are the future leaders of the profession and they will need our support.

In doing so, we will also want to make sure the Law Society is structured, organised and resourced in a way that both responds to immediate challenges and ensures resilience over the long-term.

Assure



We assure the quality of legal services, the public interest and the reputation of the profession.

- Our education and training standards ensure excellence in a tech-enabled and innovative legal profession.
- Our regulation is proportionate and risk-based, building client confidence and a competitive sector.
- Our insight into a recovering legal jurisdiction and clients' needs underpin our decision making.

At the heart of the Law Society is a commitment to protect the public interest and serve the needs of solicitors' clients.

Parliament has set us important regulatory objectives including supporting the interests of justice; protecting consumers; fostering competition in the provision of legal services; and promoting an independent legal profession.

Solicitors care passionately about being part of a profession that is trusted, respected, and works to high standards. Members consistently tell us that it is our regulatory work which they believe should be the highest priority for the Law Society as their professional body.

It is not just important for us to act when things go wrong, we need to work to prevent things going wrong in the first place. That starts with setting a route to qualification which delivers high standards and means equal and fair access to the profession. These are processes which will need to evolve in an era of remote working and digital learning. It also requires a proactive approach to training and development, assuring client money through firm account inspections, and providing guidance, tools and services that help solicitors maintain standards. This

must be coupled with action to deal with complaints quickly and fairly, intervening directly in firms when it is right to do and ensuring swift disciplinary action in serious cases of misconduct.

The publication of the 'Fit for the Future' report on legal services regulation has brought these issues higher up the agenda. We welcome that focus, not least because it was our early call for regulatory reform that led to the Scottish Government initiating its review in 2017. We will continue to make a powerful case for change to the many outdated and inefficient regulatory processes which exist in legislation, particularly in the area of complaints handling. We will push for a modern framework that better reflects legal practice, changing client needs and the transformation in legal services now being driven by technology. We will also highlight the need for a system where costs are carefully controlled so the Scottish profession is resilient in an internationally competitive market. That regulatory structure must also adhere to the constitutional principle of the rule of law and, given its expertise and values, have the Law Society sitting at the very centre of that structure.

The Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980 limits our ability to innovate and move away from often historic and outdated processes. Whilst we continue to push for the necessary changes to primary legislation, we will continue to reform and improve with pace where that change can be delivered without legislative change.

Our Regulatory Committee has statutory responsibility for the regulatory functions of the Law Society and has a vital role in meeting these objectives over these next two years. With its 50% solicitor / 50% non-solicitor membership, this committee brings together real expertise from within the profession as well as the public interest ethos of lay members. This partnership approach also exists through our regulatory sub-committees responsible for admissions, complaints, anti-money laundering, and the operation of our Client Protection Fund. It will be important for the work of these committees to get proper visibility and effective support in the period ahead.

Support



We support members to meet the challenges of a recovering legal services market and economy.

- Our services and support embrace technology to help sustain, recover and grow the profession.
- Our work promotes legaltech, wellbeing and helps members adapt to the new ways of working.
- Our careers work champions fairness and progression, supporting unemployed and under-employed members in an uncertain market.

A founding core objective of the Law Society is to act in the interests of the profession.

Every Scottish solicitor gets the same qualification to practise. However, what our members choose to do with that qualification is broader and more diverse than ever before. Where members practise is changing too, with more living and working outside Scotland and outside the UK altogether. We want to be a professional body which caters for all these different needs, including our new non-solicitor associate members.

The scale of the challenge from COVID 19 and the economic impact is immense. Whilst the legal sector has shown considerable resilience through previous economic shocks, the size and circumstances of this downturn is like none seen in the history of the Law Society. Our response needs to reflect the size of that challenge and the fact different parts of the profession are being impacted in very different ways.

We have already taken the unprecedented step of reducing expenditure and using our reserves to provide immediate financial help to the profession. We also stepped in to help firms and in-house lawyers defer their Scottish Legal Complaints Commission levy. Our

responsibility now is to build on this short-term support and take practical and meaningful action over the next two years to help the profession recover.

Those solicitors and firms who can adapt quickly to the 'new normal' have a huge opportunity to recoup and even prosper. We need to play a role in helping them. Equally, there will be many talented legal professionals who regrettably face redundancy, unemployment or under-employment. We want to work with them to protect their legal career and ensure overall solicitor numbers are at a level to ensure clients can access quality legal services in every part of Scotland.

We realise that the events of 2020 have been a deeply unsettling and distressing time for members. It is why we must prioritise work around wellbeing, good mental health and challenging stigma in the profession.

This must come over and above the core and critical services we provide and which our members value. We must remain the 'go to' body for professional advice on practice issues and serving clients to the highest standards. Our flexible training and development programme must satisfy all the differing needs in the profession, ranging from core legal knowledge to the essential people skills now needed to

succeed in today's legal services market. That must be coupled with support for the technological revolution facing the profession. New ways of working arising from this global pandemic will only serve to quicken the digital pace of change.

It is through our support work that we want to drive the change needed to improve equality and diversity. In these next two years, we will continue to deliver on this key membership priority. Our commitment is to ensure every person with the determination and talent can enter the profession, but can also reach the highest levels of it. That ability to progress needs to exist, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, or financial background. This drive for diversity must reach our judiciary through our collaborative work with the Judicial Appointments Board.

To provide support and services which are valued, we know we need to have a deep insight into our members' needs and wellbeing. It is why our engagement, right across the profession and to all sectors, will remain a priority. It will require a continual two-way dialogue that means we are open, accessible, responsive and can adapt to changing priorities.

Excel



We excel as a world leading professional body with technology and inclusion at its core.

- Our approach and technology enables a diverse community of volunteers and a high performing staff team.
- Our processes and policies are secure, agile and are guided by our values.
- Our disciplined financial plan drives our priorities, delivering efficiency and value for money.

To deliver on our objectives, the Law Society needs to be the most effective and efficient organisation possible.

We need to remain an employer that attracts and retains talented individuals. We must be an organisation in which professionals from all walks of life, solicitors and non-solicitors, want to volunteer their time and believe their contribution is valued.

Importantly, we need to ensure all our people – staff and volunteers – have the facilities and tools needed to excel in their roles.

At the heart of this work is a renewed commitment to embrace technology. The Law Society was already on a journey of digital reform with new internal systems; a vastly improved online training offering for our members; and more efficient online registration and regulatory processes. However, the events of 2020 have shown everyone what is possible and created a new impetus to change.

The digitalisation of our committees and their meetings offers a chance to engage and involve people who would not otherwise be able to contribute. A greater use of flexible and home working can create a better work-life balance for our staff and keep the Society as a competitive employer. There are major exciting

opportunities still before us to utilise smarter and better linked digital systems to quicken our processes and improve our decisions.

As an organisation, we also want to act responsibly with respect to the environment and the fight to avert a global climate crisis. We want to begin taking steps on a journey that will see the Law Society become a carbon-neutral organisation and help lead wider change in the legal sector that sets a proud example for others to follow.

However, we must live to the very different financial backdrop facing the Law Society over the next two years. Our decision to reduce the practising certificate and accounts fees by 20% for 2020/21 was an important demonstration of our commitment to help the solicitor profession through the economic storm. This decision impacted significantly on our financial reserves which will need to be replenished over time if we are to maintain our resilience for future unpredictable events. It will also require us to make difficult spending decisions for the two years this strategy covers.

The financial decisions we have taken mean we will not have the resources to do all the things we would like over the next two years. It will require us to be disciplined and mean we make choices

between different projects and activities. When we decide to do something new, it will mean something else needs to be made less of a priority or stopped altogether. In making these choices, we need to be open and transparent with our members and stakeholders.

We will also need to be innovative in driving change in our sources of income such as sponsorship, training and investment. Every pound we make commercially is a pound we do not have to charge on core membership fees. The backdrop over the next two years will, unquestionably, be more challenging but diversifying our income will be as important as ever.

One area that will remain a top priority is our commitment to equality and diversity within our organisation. We are proud that our governing Council has become increasingly diverse over recent years. The work of our Equality and Diversity Committee is recognised as leading and innovative. Our 'great places to work' staff survey results are often strongest on issues relating to being treated fairly, irrespective of gender, race, disability or sexual orientation. We want and need to do more of this work over these next two years, leading the change we encourage within legal firms and across the profession.

Influence



We influence to preserve an independent solicitor profession and fair legal system.

- Our collaborative approach ensures we shape the decisions affecting the legal sector's recovery.
- Our representative voice on the rule of law and access to justice has a positive impact in Scotland, the UK and internationally.
- Our proposals for a modern and robustly regulated legal services sector are implemented.

The decisions of others — the Scottish and UK governments and their agencies – have a substantial impact on us, our members and their clients. This includes the Scottish Legal Aid Board, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, Registers of Scotland and others. As such, it is right that we focus on influencing those decisions where we can. When we do, it must be in a reasoned and impartial way.

This desire to influence is rooted in a commitment to the rule of law; to a fair and accessible justice system; and to the creation of new laws which are workable and easy to understand. This is essential for the profession. More importantly, it is crucial for the public and for the kind of fair and just society we all want to live in.

We are and will remain a proudly non-partisan organisation which engages across the party-political divide here in Scotland and the UK. This will be particularly important in 2021 when Scotland chooses the 129 individuals who will sit as members of the Scottish Parliament for the next five years. It is an election which is likely to have a significant bearing on the country's constitutional future.

The Law Society is fortunate to have access to a broad wealth of knowledge and expertise, both in our staff team and amongst our committee volunteers. As such, we are well placed to provide informed and well-evidenced input into

government, parliament and the various public bodies responsible for the smooth administration of justice.

Given the challenges facing the profession currently and the need for a well-managed and sustained recovery, we have a wider interest in influencing other aspects of public policy decision making. Post-Brexit decisions around trade, immigration, security cooperation and market regulation, will all impact the legal sector we support. The difficult decisions being taken in response to COVID 19 will determine the scale and nature of the economic recovery to come.

Our interest is to ensure that jobs and the wider economic contribution of the legal sector is protected over the long-term. In an increasingly international market, this also means preserving and enhancing the competitiveness of the Scottish legal jurisdiction and solicitor firms.

Over the course of this two-year strategy, we want to ensure the broad range of legal services available to the public is maintained. That is particularly important in terms of legal aid, which offers a lifeline to many of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our society. However, the pressures which existed before COVID 19 have only been intensified by the virus and the response to it. Without action and direct support, an access to justice crisis could easily emerge. We are clear that access to quality legal services and effective

representation must be available to all who need it and not just a privileged few.

Our aim to influence extends to the technological transformation of our courts; a process we want to work with our judiciary and courts service to help shape. We also want to influence changes to the property market, the increasing use of alternative dispute resolution, and wider regulatory changes will all require the Law Society to keep making its voice heard. That voice needs to continue be backed up with sound arguments and compelling evidence.

We also understand the power of the profession as an influencing force in its own right. With a breadth of work and expertise, the powerful and respected voices throughout the profession need to be supported on legal, economic and social issues.

The Law Society will continue to play its part internationally too, building on the organisation's long track record of taking an outward-looking and internationalist approach. The financial pressures which form the backdrop to this strategy will inevitably temper the scale of that activity. However, we will continue to engage colleagues from other jurisdictions, learning examples of best practice and using our expertise to influence internationally. Embracing new technology offers us a chance to do this differently and in a more cost-effective and environmentally responsible way.

Evolve



We evolve to maintain our financial sustainability and support a recovering legal services sector.

- Our membership options evolve to include those supporting Scottish solicitors and the legal sector.
- Our activity and services are more accessible, rebuilt on the latest technology to remove geographical and physical barriers.
- Our commercial operations recover to take pressure off core fees and help replenish reserves.

If ever there was a period which required the Law Society to change, it is now.

Our platinum anniversary year in 2019 was a moment for us to celebrate all that the solicitor profession has achieved over the last 70 years. It also allowed us to reflect on the huge change seen since the Law Society was formed in 1949.

Today's legal profession is larger and more diverse than ever before, both in its make-up and its work. Consumer expectations are fundamentally changing the way legal firms do business. Social attitudes are evolving. Technology continues to change the way we live, personally and professionally.

Change is not just something we tolerate; it is something we actively and positively embrace.

It is why we have begun to open our membership to non-solicitor legal professionals. Our approach to equality and diversity is recognised by other jurisdictions as ground-breaking. It was our case for change proposals in 2015 that acted as the catalyst for the Scottish Government legal services review and set foundations for the reform to come.

COVID 19, and the social and economic impact which has followed, means we must change our thinking once more. It will require us to accelerate reform, both in what we do and how we do it. However, we are also realistic about the nature of the

economic downturn and why it means our earlier plan to grow needs to evolve into a plan to sustain and recover, at least for the next two years.

As the legal sector evolves, so too must our attitude and approach to the new and evolving roles within that sector.

We have worked hard to create new and enhance existing voluntary memberships for paralegals and legal technicians. Our student associate membership and Law Society fellow scheme reflects our desire to have a strong and lasting relationship with those about to embark on a legal career and those who are concluding it.

We want to quicken an expansion of this family of memberships. The period ahead could see the creation of more innovative roles. It will also require existing traditional roles to adapt and change. It is important for the Law Society to be there, setting standards and servicing needs in all parts of the sector.

That activity, whether for solicitors or non-solicitor members, needs to be flexible and innovative. We will use technology, not just in the delivery of these services but also in our outreach, so we can engage with all parts of the profession.

This commitment to evolve will drive changes in our regulatory work too. We will continue to push hard for the statutory reforms which are so urgently needed to improve the regulatory system, both

for consumers and solicitors. However, we recognise that COVID 19 and other competing political priorities mean new legislation could still be some time away. It means we must strive to innovate and find ways of evolving our approach within the existing statutory framework.

All of this will be underpinned by an achievable and sustainable financial plan. Our ongoing focus on commercial income will not be a case of making money for the sake of it. It is about having the resources needed to sustain the breadth of work we do, which the public depend on and which our members value. Sustaining this non-core revenue means we can continue to keep the cost of practice as low as feasibly possible through carefully controlled core membership fees. Given the need for recovery in the profession, we know this focus will be more important than ever.

Looking at our own resilience and sustainability, we also need to use revenue to replenish the reserves we chose to use to provide immediate financial support to the profession. It is vital that the Law Society remains on a sound and solid financial footing, now and in the long-term. Therefore each time a member of the profession or wider legal sector chooses a Law Society event, course or service over that of another provider, they are helping us ensure we are there to help again in the future if it is ever needed.



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