

## Editorial/News

### Bar School's Legal Practice Course

The training of prospective solicitors at the largest Bar School in the UK has come a step nearer. The Inns of Court School of Law (ICSL) received a validation visit from the Law Society in September and the Panel is recommending that the ICSL's Legal Practice Course should be validated to take 100 students from September 2000. The recommendation went to the Legal Practice Board on 20 October.

The LPC at the ICSL is being set up in response to demands for a high quality course in London with a clear commercial focus. City firms have been involved in advising on its development. Legal research and writing will be particularly emphasised, as will the understanding of the substantive law needed for practice. The use of IT will be integral to the programme and will aim to make students expert in electronic research methods.

The ICSL, based in Gray's Inn, will teach the course in a dedicated LPC suite within its existing premises. Students will benefit from the high level of IT and audio-visual equipment available for individual use and in all teaching rooms, as well as the Legal Training Resource Centre, the ICSL's IT-based library.

The LPC students will study alongside the ICSL's 750 full-time and 100 part-time Bar Vocational Course students. The current changes in the roles of both sides of the profession make this a logical development for the ICSL.

The ICSL is affiliated to City University, which will provide students with a postgraduate diploma in professional legal studies on successful completion of the LPC.

For further information contact: Mark McCartney on 01442 261199 ([Mark@icas.co.uk](mailto:Mark@icas.co.uk)).

### IMF Launches Home Pages in French and Spanish

The International Monetary Fund has launched Home Pages on its website in French

(<http://www.imf.org/fre/index.htm>)

and Spanish

(<http://www.imf.org/spa/index.htm>)

to provide key information to a broad audience in languages other than English.

The pages expand the wide range of information and publications already accessible to the general public on the IMF's website (<http://www.imf.org>).

### The Lord Chancellor Appoints New Chief Land Registrar

Mr Peter Collis has been appointed as Chief Land Registrar and Chief Executive of HM Land Registry.

Mr Collis, previously Director of Finance and Commercial Policy at the Employment Service, took

up his appointment on 1 November. He succeeds Dr Stuart Hill who has taken a post with the National Federation of House Builders.

### Chairman for Gas Consumers Council

The Minister for Consumers and Corporate Affairs has announced the appointment of Ms Ann Robinson as Chairman of the Gas Consumers Council (GCC) until 31 December 2003.

In taking on the GCC chair, Ms Robinson will become chairman designate of the joint Consumer Council that the government intends to create to rationalise and converge the activities of the GCC and the regional Electricity Consumer Committees.

The gas and electricity industries supply essential services for domestic, industrial and commercial consumers. The growing convergence of these markets, with many companies now supplying both gas and electricity, has led the government to conclude that consistent and effective regulation requires the amalgamation of the regulatory regimes. The consumer will be at the heart of the new regime and the government has announced that it intends to create a joint gas and electricity consumer council. It is expected that Ms Robinson will be the first chairman of the new council subject to the necessary Parliamentary approval of the relevant legislation.

### Companies House Eases Red Tape for Limited Companies

New regulations relating to the Annual Return were laid before Parliament in early August. These will have the effect of repealing the requirements on companies to list their directors' other directorships and to state whether certain elective resolutions are in force, when they present their Annual Return. These changes will be reflected in all versions of the Annual Return, including the Shuttle, Form 363s.

Companies House aimed to start production of the new Shuttle in September. These should have been sent to companies with return dates from 28 September 1999 onwards.

As well as requiring less information every year, Companies House will be able to pre-print capital and shareholder information on the Shuttle Annual Returns that are sent to companies which have up to twenty members and which have already made at least one previous Annual Return. At least 80% of companies will meet these criteria. This will have the benefit of making capital and shareholder information more transparent.

Completing the new form will be much easier for most companies and will enable them to provide a full list of members to Companies House with each Annual Return instead of with every third Annual Return as was the case.

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