

The partnership of progress

THIS year has seen the merger of two of South Yorkshire's oldest law firms; Wake Smith with a history of 204 years and Benson Clegg with a history of over 150 years. Despite such longevity the merged firm is at the cutting edge, in terms of the use of IT in the delivery of its service.

The new practice now has over 180 employees, 22 Partners and 50 Solicitors and is the largest 'non-national' firm in the region.

Wake Smith's, company commercial partner, John Baddeley led the talks between the two firms, he explains: "Part of the reason for our merger with Benson Clegg was that they too were well established. Some parts were founded in the 1850s. They too were part of Sheffield's history and our cultures were very similar.

"By merging we are now able to offer an even better service to a greater number of clients.

"This means that we are very well placed to take advantage of future opportunities and to meet the challenges ahead for all legal practices. The city of Sheffield and the surrounding region

needs a strong local firm such as Wake Smith incorporating Benson Clegg to provide a realistic cost effective alternative to the national firms."

"The firm's strategy has been to retain its pre-eminence in its traditional fields of law and to develop its expertise in serving commercial and statutory bodies. The firm has of course developed out of recognition since 1802 and has doubled in size prior to the merger in the preceding 3 years.

"The range and the quality of services delivered by the firm is such that we are as proud of our services in difficult child-care matters as we are of our services to individuals, families, commerce and local and statutory authorities in matters which are often of great financial or strategic significance to the Clients concerned.

"The merged firm is now even better placed to compete against the national firms and to meet the challenges ahead with increased competition from non-lawyers, restrictions on legal aid and the increased levels of service required to meet client expectations in the 21st century."



Wake Smith Senior Partner Michael Tunbridge (centre) welcomes the Benson Clegg partners Jackie Lawson, Andrew Viddler, Barry Gregory and Holly Dobson

We need to shout about our great attractions

RESEARCH indicates that in these days of increased leisure spend, as well as heading to faraway shores on a regular basis people are now taking more holidays and short breaks in the UK.

We must encourage everyone to see Sheffield as a city they should visit and attract thousands more people every year and reap the benefits of their stay.

Our first challenge is to quash the myth that Sheffield and South Yorkshire doesn't attract tourists. The very word 'tourist' is misleading. If asked the question 'Is Sheffield a tourist destination?' most people would say no. If asked 'Does Sheffield attract visitors through its fantastic event and entertainment programme?' then most people would reply yes. A visitor is a tourist.

Many of the big events like the concerts and events at the Arena, the World Snooker Championship, The Grand Prix Athletics and Channel 4's The Games attract thousands of people to the city. The Red Hot Chili Peppers and The Rolling Stones concerts at Don Valley Stadium this summer filled hotel rooms not just in Sheffield but all those between Chesterfield and Barnsley. Visitors to Sheffield International Venues sporting facilities alone generated over £10m in spend in 2005 and the company staged in excess of 1,500 events at its world class facilities.

Our second challenge is to push the importance of tourism to agencies and organisations across the city. We need to act as the 'voice of the industry' and 'sell our case'. In the past I think we have been unclear and sometimes vague. The tourism industry employs thousands of people



Chief executive of Sheffield International Venues and chair of Sheffield Tourism Steve Brailey looks at how Sheffield needs to stand up and shout about its great attractions and events

across the city region and generates enormous visitor spend but we have not captured the figures and been able to prove our case.

Our third challenge is to package our attractions to encourage business and event visitors to stay longer or to return for another visit. The city has a great array of benefits that can be linked. We have spectacular scenery, beautiful parks, a fantastic theatre, arts and music scene, an internationally renowned calendar of sporting events, wonderful heritage, superb shopping, great restaurants and an expanding hotel portfolio – all easily accessed from any part of the UK.

City centre redevelopments, through projects such as St Paul's Place, the City Hall, the Millennium Galleries, the Winter Garden, the Peace Gardens, the new Retail Quarter, a high technology business park and the new 4-star MacDonald Hotel show we now are focused on bringing people into the city centre while Meadowhall remains one of the UK's top shopping destinations.

Add to this a safe city, green spaces, Premiership football and a thriving music scene and we have a city we are proud to promote.

The Yorkshire Tourist Board and Yorkshire Forward have already acknowledged that Sheffield has a significant role to play in promoting the region and have established a sub-regional South Yorkshire Destination Marketing Partnership which also covers Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley. At long last there is money available to support and develop our business and we need to take advantage of this opportunity.

The Sheffield Tourism steering group, which includes representatives from SIV, Sheffield Theatres, the Holiday Inn, the Hilton Hotel, the Cultural Industries Quarter, Sheffield Galleries, Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield City Council, meets monthly and ensures the views of Sheffield are represented at the SYDMP Board.

These are exciting times for Sheffield, with so much investment in new developments and new proposals for business and leisure being brought forward all the time. The tourism and visitor economy is growing steadily and will play an important role in Sheffield's bright future.

Meet The Specialists



Wake Smith has been established over 200 years. The firm has expertise in all areas of the law. We have attracted dynamic new partners and solicitors to further strengthen the firm. Competing on price and experience Wake Smith regularly wins new clients over larger national law firms.

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