

Dear members,

And finally a newsletter!!!

As you know, we are just over 9 months old now and I take this opportunity to let everyone know where we are and what we're doing – also what our agenda is now we've settled in (so to speak).

We are still totally dedicated to lobbying for SMEs – we've been to 10 Downing Street and, more importantly we've been to the Treasury to put our case for an alternative system for SMEs to have Access to Justice. I think it would be fair to say this is the single most important issue for our members because so many of them have disputes with the banking sector but can neither rely on the regulators or afford costly litigation. Maybe the fact our first meeting was at the Law Society, set the tone for what we would do in the future!

On 5th June we had our fourth meeting and it was exclusively on the subject of Fraud and Access to Justice. Jon Welsby did a fantastic job at getting some top experts to speak at this meeting and lay out exactly what SMEs need to do to get justice and also what they can expect. It was an illuminating and eye opening meeting. Those members who couldn't attend will be glad to know the whole event was professionally filmed and is now being edited so that each speaker will be on an individual video which we will put on You Tube. But this meeting also made me think we really need to get a move on with our plans for alternative and more cost effective routes to justice for SMEs. Just to remind everyone, here is the report we sent to Gutto Bebb MP and Andrea Leadsom MP while she was secretary to the Treasury Minister.

<http://www.smealliance.org/blog/report-to-andrea-leadsom-mp-on-an-alternative-dispute-resolution-system-for-smes>

I've noticed things move slowly when you're dealing with Government and Ministers – and not least when a general election falls slap bang in the middle of those dealings. But we have written to the new secretary to the Treasury and we are waiting for confirmation of another meeting to progress FOS Plus at Government level. If anyone has a supportive MP please do send them the report and ask if they would support us in this? We hope and intend our next meeting to have a very political element to it and it would be excellent if we could get some MPs to attend.

BTW, if anyone has a really good alternative name to FOS Plus, please let us know!

Another Government department that is very interested in our ideas regarding regulation and our views on good policies v bad policies for SMEs, is BIS. I spoke with Sue Bide (an excellent contact from Nick Gould) at BIS today and there are a number of initiatives and reviews being launched by Anna Soubry (the new Minister for SMEs) in the near future which SME Alliance will be asked to contribute to. By that I mean all members will be able to put forward their ideas and concerns on a range of subjects. I'm not sure what those subjects are at the moment but I do know they include the situation between banks, regulators and SMEs. So I have sent Sue our report and we have a meeting scheduled for the 29th June. Sue has gone so far as to say BIS would even be prepared to engage with individual SMEs on specific matters. I will of course report back on how we can collaborate and contribute to BIS reviews.

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When we wrote to Andrea Leadsom back in January we also wrote to the FCA asking for a meeting. Unfortunately and you'll be surprised to know, we have never had a reply. However, I have been speaking to people at the FCA recently on behalf of Whistle blowers and I have pointed out that many members of SME Alliance could be described as 'external whistle blowers' which is how Paul and I have been classified with regard to HBOS Reading. I know members have tried to bring various examples of misconduct in Banks to the attention of the FCA and are invariably met with the reply "the FCA does not look at individual cases."

Jeremy Tizzard at the FCA who works with whistle blowers has now said he will have a meeting on the subject of 'external whistle blowers' and hopefully, when that has happened, it will mean we have a direct point of contact at the FCA to report misconduct on behalf of members. I know there is a consensus of opinion that the FCA are firmly in the enemy camp (and I have pointed this out to Jeremy) and therefore we are wasting our time dealing with them. The same could be said for various Government agencies but the fact we have had little or no contact with them (while the banks make it their business to keep a foot in the door), simply makes it easier for them to ignore us. So we need these meetings. Hopefully the meeting will be confirmed in the next week.

The only other regulator I want to mention is the SRA who we met with last year but we haven't really had much follow up or feed back save for one round table meeting Jon Welsby attended in Yorkshire a few months ago. So it is a priority now for us to move this forward and perhaps the best way to do this is to collate any concerns members have about the legal sector and their dealings with SMEs? For example, at our seminar on fraud, one of the speakers (I can't remember which one) confirmed how legal firms representing banks will often draw out any proceedings and deliberately complicate matters in order to price their opponents out of the game. How can this be right? Isn't this a wilful obstruction of justice by legal professionals? And is the SRA aware of this tactic? Is there any regulation in place which could curtail this?

So any thoughts you have on this – please e-mail [smealliance2014@gmail.com](mailto:smealliance2014@gmail.com) and add the title SRA.

Other things we are doing include progressing an excellent plan from Andy Keats to help those members who, even when we do get FOS Plus up and running, have no alternative but to litigate. We hope to send details of this to members in the next few weeks and certainly before our next meeting (date to be advised).

Some members will be representing SME Alliance at the 'Cambridge Symposium on Economic Crime' on 10th September this year. We booked this several months ago and it should be a brilliant day when we can get our points across to key academics, various authorities and the media. Unfortunately we were limited on how many people could attend for us (we got it up from 10 to 11). I have asked how much it costs for anyone not speaking to attend – and I'm horrified to announce the present price is £480 + VAT!! So I'm guessing we won't see too many members faces in the audience! This price is more to do with the college than the excellent organisers (Barry Ryder and his team) but they have said they are going to try and sort out a better price. For those people who are attending as speakers, lunch is complimentary as is 'cocktails in the Marquee' at 7.00pm but anyone wanting to stay for dinner will have to pay £70.80 per head. I will post the programme asap. It is up now but there are a couple of mistakes in relation to members current positions.

Founder member John Kidd has very kindly been looking at what additional social media tools we should be using. He has tried very hard to explain to me all the different platforms and sites we could be using over and above twitter and Facebook and has probably decided you can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink! So he is now looking into that himself. Many thanks John.

Well this is something different! - one new foray we have made into social media is our vlog!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDYtlhGzpRI>

It may seem as if I've gone completely mad and clearly I won't be getting a starring role in any movies in the near future but we do like to be first at SME Alliance and, to the best of my knowledge, no other organisations like ours are using this incredibly successful media to spread the word. Vlogs have predominantly been the domain of the young and beautiful to talk about celebs, beauty tips or where they have a tattoo (I'm sure there are many more informative ones) but I don't see why this format wouldn't work for SME Alliance to talk about key issues of interest to members. So I've done the first one which is just by way of introduction, Clive is doing one for next week and Nigel the week after. If you have something you'd like to say (that won't get us sued for libel) please do join the vlog team! Also, please subscribe to the vlog and add comments and questions as that is another way to get our profile up.

I mentioned briefly at the seminar that we are rebuilding our website. This isn't because there's anything wrong with it – we are simply overloading it which makes it perform slowly and restricts how much more we can add. Fortunately we have an IT expert (you know the type, out of the pram straight onto the computer) who is helping Laura programme a new site which will be bigger and better. Hopefully it will be finished in the next couple of weeks.

I am fully aware we need to add far more press clippings to our site and also keep updating the library and the members services (it was doing this particular exercise which made us realise we need a bigger boat). But if any one has any thought or ideas on what else they would like to see on the site, please do let us know. For example – what information would members like us to research or report on outside of banking and regulation? There must be something??

One thing we could definitely do with over and above the website and something SME Alliance is well placed to do before it gets too big, is to create a database of information relating to banks, bankers, Ips, LPA receiver, lawyers etc. It's a big job but not impossible and it could be incredibly helpful to all. I don't know if Bully Banks or other organisations have this already but we would be missing an opportunity not to make our own database. So we will be sending out a questionnaire in the near future. It won't be applicable to all members and no one has any obligation to complete it – but we hope you will. The names and contact details of the people supplying information will not be published on the database.

## Notifications

We have been contacted by Tom McCabe – those of you who attended the seminar on fraud will remember Tom posed a very impassioned question to the panel of speakers. I know many people feel very strongly about the way they have been treated by IPs so I am passing Toms e-mail request on:

*My MP Ruth Cadbury is willing to lead an APPG . She needs as much support as possible from other MPs and members of the House of Lords .*

*The bankers and accountants could not have committed their crimes without the help of the accountants .One retired Insolvency Practitioner said to me "Tom being an IP is a licence to steal money ." They have no independent governing body .*

*Zac Goldsmith asked in Parliament "Of the 70 complaints against Grant Thornton to the IPA how many have been actioned ? " Sorry no prizes for the correct answer .None*

*They are not all criminals .However working class kids are serving prison sentences for what the police call " Joint enterprise " We need a Insolvency Ombudsman with teeth.*

*They should not be allowed to charge more than 50% in fees of the original debt .*

*All assets should be advertised and auctioned . No IP should be allowed to be receiver and trustee.*

*Fees should be capped to £200 Per hour . There should be an open bidding for the role .*

*Anyone interested contact your MP and or email me [Tom@broadtalk.com](mailto:Tom@broadtalk.com)*

*Regards*



# NEWSLETTER

22/06/2015

Another interesting contact we've had comes from Mark, @Nat\_Worst. Mark is a former banker and he has been incredibly helpful to one of our members who has received a substantial amount of documents from RBS thanks to the way Mark composed his SAR. There is a technique and, if you get it right, your Bank has to supply the information requested. Mark has very kindly said he will help other members who want to send a SAR to RBS. His e-mail address is: [anfieldreds10@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:anfieldreds10@yahoo.co.uk)

I hope this newsletter has been helpful and informative. Many thanks to all our members for their continued support – without doubt it is the 'support network' of SME Alliance which has been our most outstanding success to date and I know many members are now in regular contact with each other – and not just across twitter. I look forward to any feedback and hope to announce the next meeting in the next few weeks.

Kind regards  
Nikki