

Judging Your Future

The monthly e-newsletter from the
Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC)



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Welcome to the February edition of Judging your Future. Our highlight this month is an interview with District Judge Michael Walker, Honorary Secretary of the Association of District Judges, who gives some insight into the pros and cons of embarking on a judicial career. This newsletter also includes dates of current and forthcoming selection exercises and news about our forthcoming roadshow events.

If you have any queries or would like to receive further information on JAC events, please email us at judgingyourfuture@jac.gsi.gov.uk.

0.1 Current selection exercises

Applications for the following selection exercises are currently being accepted:

Regional Chairman – Employment Tribunals

Closing date: 16 February 2007

Location: Birmingham and London North West (Watford)

Vacancies / 2

Senior Master – Queen’s Bench Division

Closing date: 20 February 2007

Location: Royal Courts of Justice, London

Vacancies / 1

Please ensure that you check the eligibility criteria for each role on our website.

Further information about the selection exercises can be found at
<http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk/current/current.htm>

0.2 Forthcoming selection exercises

We are committed to providing as much information as we can about selection exercises that are scheduled to commence.

However, we can only announce selection exercises when we have received an official vacancy request from our customers at Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) and the Tribunals Service. The vacancies detailed below have had an official vacancy request and are due to commence in February and March.

Please be aware that scheduled commencement dates are provisional and subject to change.

Regional Chairman – Residential Property Tribunal (Wales)

Launch date: 13 February 2007

Location: Wales

Vacancies / 6

Legally Qualified Members – Social Security and Child Support Appeal Tribunals

Launch date: 13 February 2007

Location: Midlands and South East regions

Vacancies / 10

Deputy Bankruptcy Registrars

Launch date: 13 February 2007

Location: Royal Courts of Justice, London

Vacancies / 2

Deputy Chancery Masters

Launch date: 13 February 2007

Location: Royal Courts of Justice, London

Vacancies / 5

Disability Qualified Members – Social Security and Child Support Appeal Tribunals

Launch date: TBC

Location: South East region and Scotland

Vacancies / 12

Specialist Medical Members - Mental Health Review Tribunal

Launch date: TBC

Location: across England

Vacancies / 24

Senior Circuit Judge – Central Criminal Court

Launch date: TBC

Location: London

Vacancies / 1

Resident Senior Circuit Judges (Crime)

Launch date: TBC

Location: Birmingham, Cardiff, Inner London and Leeds

Vacancies / 4

Resident Senior Circuit Judges (Chancery)

Launch date: TBC

Location: Cardiff and London

Vacancies / 2

District Judges (Magistrates Court)

Launch date: TBC

Location: across England and Wales

Vacancies / 21

President – Competition Appeal Tribunal

Launch date: TBC

Location: London (the Tribunal is based in London but may sit anywhere that is convenient)

Vacancies / 1

Please ensure that you check the eligibility criteria for the roles on our website when the selection exercises are live.

0.3 Judicial career roadshows

Thanks to all who contacted us with suggestions for where we should hold our next judicial careers roadshows.

The next round of roadshows will be in April/May, and we are intending to visit the following cities:

Nottingham

Exeter

Liverpool

Cambridge

Brighton

London

Please check our website <http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk> regularly for further information.

0.4 Profile of a Judge

This month sees the first in what we hope will be a regular series of interviews with members of the judiciary, our Commissioners, and other senior figures. This month's interview is with District Judge Michael Walker who sits at Wandsworth County Court, in south London. Since 2000 he has been Hon Secretary of the Association of District Judges, which represents all the 430 civil and family district judges of the High Court and county courts across England and Wales. In the New Year's Honours List he was appointed a CBE.

1) How long have you been a judge?

As a full-time judge I am now coming up to 13 years in post, and I still find every day different. Despite what might seem to be superficial similarity, no two cases are ever quite the same; the parties are always different, as are the facts.

2) Why did you decide to choose a judicial career?

To be honest, I really didn't. As a solicitor, I had conducted the advocacy in one of my cases – quite well, I thought – and to my horror the trial judge asked me to stay behind at the end. That was in 1990, but even now I can remember the feeling of total panic as I wondered what fate awaited me. The Children Act 1989 was about to be implemented and it was clear that there needed to be more district judges on the bench. Had I thought of applying, he asked me. I hadn't, but he talked me through what it all meant, and then I did. As the saying goes, the rest is history.

3) What are the best aspects of your role?

For anyone with a belief in the importance of justice, an interest in the law and a concern for the lot of the common man, then what I do as a district judge must be the dream job. How many of us have the luxury of dealing with only one matter at a time in a situation where the 'phone never rings and where everyone is (supposed to be) polite to you?

As a judge you have the ability, shared with Judge Deed, to help people out when they feel at their worst; equally, when someone loses a case there is a feeling of a job well done when s/he thanks you for an explanation s/he can both understand and accept.

4) What are the worst aspects of your role?

Unlike being in private practice, you cannot at very short notice book yourself out of the office for a couple of hours of personal time; the lists come in day-by-day, relentlessly. But, with a little planning, work-arounds can usually be found.

5) What advice would you give to someone considering a judicial career?

I sat as a deputy District Judge for about three years before taking up a full-time appointment. As a new deputy, I had been on a week's Induction Course, which was really useful in helping to understand what we call "judgcraft". And I had then sat regularly as a deputy, at times as often as one day a week. It meant that by the time I applied for a full-time post I was well aware of what the job held for me.

These days it is also possible to work shadow a full time judge before submitting the initial application to become a deputy; that wasn't available in 1990 but what better way to see what the work entails than to sit with a judge for a few days, seeing all that s/he does and being able to ask all those difficult questions you have been storing up?

0.5 Any questions?

As always we welcome your questions and comments. Please send them in to **judgingyourfuture@jac.gsi.gov.uk**

Do pass on details of Judging Your Future to your colleagues. They can access it via our website but to receive it via email they will need to register with us at the same email address.

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