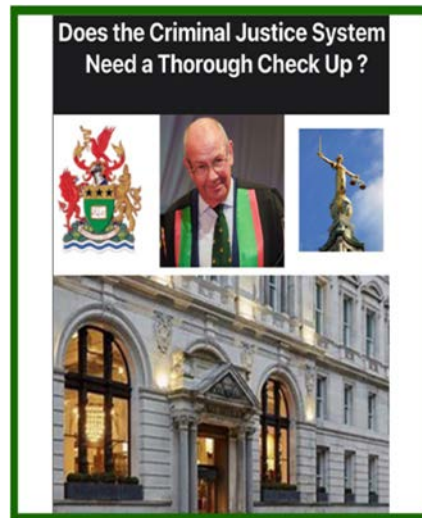


The Master's Lecture in collaboration with Cardiff Business Club and Knights Frank

Parkgate Hotel, Cardiff

Monday 20 May 2024



His Honour Nicholas Cooke KC calls for criminal justice system 'health check' ?

This event was a collaboration between the Master of the Worshipful Livery Company of Wales **Agnes Xavier-Phillips JP DL** and the **Cardiff Business Club** of which she is a VP member and sponsored by **Knights Frank** held at a dinner event on 20 May at the Parkgate Hotel, Cardiff. .

Every year the incumbent Master of the Livery Company organises a Master's Lecture and this year the Master, a Solicitor chose a Legal theme and **His Honour Nicholas Cooke KC**, formerly Recorder of Cardiff and a Judge who sat in the Old Bailey and the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) offered to be the Speaker.



The Lecture was preceded by a Drinks Reception which gave all attendees an opportunity to mingle and network. There were over 90 attendees made of Liverymen, guests and members of Cardiff Business Club.



The topic of his lecture was how the current criminal justice system needs a comprehensive health check. He opened with stating how this field of law has changed since he began studying in 1973, becoming more micromanaged and less subjectively determined by judges.

His Honour discussed miscarriages of justice and how they have always happened, the emperor's clothes mentality surrounding them and how legislation has responded effectively to them, albeit following some pushing. He referenced the post office scandal in depth, describing it as the worst miscarriage of justice in Europe, and read an excerpt from his letter in The Guardian on the topic.

He also used the post office scandal to talk about trends and how they affect, or rather don't affect, Crown Court judges. It has been said that Crown Court judges act independently and don't need to take note of trend, but he disagreed and stated that if a judge becomes aware of a trend, he or she should note and respond to it. If the judges involved in the post office scandal had acted in response to trends, perhaps the miscarriage of justice wouldn't have been so large.

His Honour then discussed a need for a more locally focussed criminal justice system and how one has the potential to reduce crime in specific areas, such as gang violence in

London. With a local criminal justice system that reflects local needs, the whole system should work better. He questioned whether the British criminal justice system is the fairest in the world as many still believe but retains the hope we can make it so.

Delving into many of his past cases, cases that haunt him, His Honour then discussed how the current criminal justice system fails to deal with fatal violence against women. He called upon a need to change the starting points for setting minimum terms in murder, by referencing the weapon used, before speaking of Kirsty Treloar and Rebecca Sessacar's cases, showing photos of the two women to emphasise how they were real people to be remembered. The cases involved "a catalogue of appalling failures" with previous warning signs ignored and other shocking errors.

His Honour used these strong stories to emphasise the need for a review of the entire criminal justice system, before delving into some questions posed by the room.

The event was expertly chaired by **Philip Jardine of Blake Morgan Solicitors** and the vote of thanks was delivered by the **Master Agnes Xavier-Phillips JP DL**. The Livery Company is very grateful to **Knight Frank** for sponsoring the event.





Agnes Xavier-Phillips JP DL
Master 2024-2025
Worshipful Company of Wales

