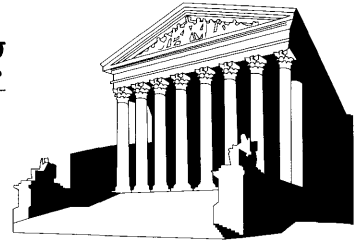




Society of Construction Law Hong Kong

香港建築法學會



A new Society of Construction Law is being formed in Hong Kong. This month our regular contributor *Arthur McInnis* takes the lid off the society to see what is cooking.

First Steps

Tucked away in one of the function rooms of the Foreign Correspondents Club a month or so ago a band of intrepid construction law types met to gauge the level of interest in forming a new society to further interest in the field of construction law. The band was a rag tag group with sundry surveyors, barristers, solicitors, arbitrators, engineers and perhaps one or two others thrown in for good measure. The camaraderie was high as was the enthusiasm for going forward — even before drinks. The decision was thus an easy one. We would go forward. Planning began in earnest on what would be the founding event for the new society — the Society of Construction Law Hong Kong (SCLHK). Before turning to that planning though a word is in order about the origins of the society in the UK.

Origins

The first Society of Construction Law began in London in 1983 with a like-minded handful of members. Its main objective was straightforward — the promotion, for the public benefit, of education, study and research in the field of construction law and its related subjects both in the UK and overseas. Today the UK society boasts more than 1,000 members who meet almost monthly for seminars and presentations on a wide variety of topics of interest to the professions. The UK society comprises branches but also supports fully independent counterparts with similar objectives to its own. In Hong Kong, the decision taken was to go form as an independent body from the outset with strong links to the UK society. Apart from the UK most European countries also have an organisation similar to the society that meets on formal and informal bases annually or otherwise through or under the auspices of the European Society of Construction Law.

The SCLHK Objectives

The SCLHK will pursue a number of important objectives which have been set out in its founding constitution and include:

- instigating research, studies and working parties on all aspects of construction law and technology, and publishing the useful results
 - publishing or communicating information relating to construction law and related matters
 - establishing relationships, association and liaison with other persons and bodies in China and overseas sharing similar objectives and well as exchanging information, studies and results with them, and, importantly,
 - encouraging professionals and others from all related disciplines and sectors of the construction industry to join the society
- The society is being formed and will operate as a charity.

Membership

A simple membership structure has been adopted. Unlike the UK society the founders are accorded no special status under the constitution, and one-third will retire upon completion of their original terms. The signatories to the constitution will become the first members of the council and subject to election in following years. The officers comprise a chairman and vice-chairman who will be elected annually and a treasurer and secretary who will be appointed by members of the Council. Ordinary members need only agree to a membership fee of HK\$450 on joining with an annual membership that has been agreed to be waived this year as well as be willing to declare in writing a serious and active interest in construction law. The possibility of co-opting members and granting honorary memberships has also been left open.

Founding Seminar

The first event organised by the society through the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre pending formal registration as a society took place in March and was indicative of the types of topics that members can expect. The lineup of speakers included:

- James Niehorster — Citex — who introduced the aims behind the SCLHK
- John Burgess — the current chairman of the UK society — who outlined its successful role
- The Honourable Mr Justice Burrell — Construction and Arbitration List Judge — who spoke about “What the Construction and Arbitration List Judge Expects in Court”, and
- John Powell, QC — co-author of *Jackson and Powell on Negligence* — who spoke about “The Changing Coastline of Professional Negligence”

In the coming months a series of other leading speakers will follow in their footsteps.

Events and Venue

The first event is taking place at the American Club in Exchange Square, although a number of other venues are actively being considered including the Hong Kong Club and the Foreign Correspondents Club. Events may be charged for nominally or the possibility of free admission and cash bars, etc, is also being considered as ways and means of funding the society’s activities on a cost efficient

basis. The intention is to be able supply members with copies of the papers presented or summaries as well as a newsletter and other membership benefits. Timing for the events has been decided bearing in mind the importance of not running too late and yet allowing sufficient time for some members to attend events from site, hence a 6:15pm start time. It is expected that an annual lunch and/or dinner will also form part of the yearly programme being planned.

New Members Welcome

The Construction Law Society Hong Kong is being set up to fulfil the interest of members for a professional, well-organised and dynamic construction law body. It is off to a tremendous start and with the support of readers and others can make a real contribution to the industry. New members are now welcome and application forms can be obtained by contacting Primrose Law at the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre on 2525-2381. ■AAC

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