

# Our new office in the heart of Cardiff city centre

05 July 2023

With the opening of our Cardiff office this week, we're sitting down to talk to Head of Office Tim Edds, and Executive Lead for Wales, Laura Hughes to discuss both the background to our first Welsh office and future plans for the firm's work in Wales.

The firm has delivered legal advice to clients in Wales for over 25 years and the decision to open an office in Cardiff is the culmination of many years work by many people in the firm to build our client base and reputation in Wales.

We work for a range of public and private sector clients such as Welsh Government, the Independent Monitoring Authority for Citizens Rights, Natural Resources Wales, Qualification Wales, a number of local authorities, health boards and other arm's length bodies in the public sector; and Sodexo and SASA Group UK in the private sector, amongst others. Our new office will build on that history to further our aspirations and deliver quality legal advice to both current and new clients in Wales.

## Laura Hughes, Executive Lead for Wales, Partner

*"We know we have the expertise in key areas of the Welsh economy such as tech and energy, and we are already developing links with local businesses in these sectors."*

## Why have we decided to open a new Cardiff office, and why now?

**Laura:** We've worked in Wales for more than 25 years for a range of clients. Having established ourselves as a leading public sector practice in the Welsh market, the time is now right to further enhance our offering to the Welsh market by setting down roots in the capital city.

We're extremely proud of our public sector credentials, but we can draw on our full range of services and expertise across the public and private sectors across the UK and Ireland to provide a full suite of legal services to the Welsh market.

Additionally, in Tim we've got the right person to lead the office and we've recruited locally in the past 12 months so that we have seven lawyers based in Wales who will call the new office home.

**Tim:** Yes, the time is absolutely right both in terms of needing a permanent space to cement and further enhance our Welsh offer, and for the number of people we have recruited locally who live in and around Cardiff. We are all incredibly excited to get in to the office and work from there all together much more regularly than has been possible whilst we have all been remotely based, and we can't wait to welcome our clients to our newly refurbished premises.

**Laura:** We also believe that we can truly bring something different to the legal market in Wales, not only terms of our specialist legal areas, but also in respect of Social Mobility and Diversity and Inclusion. We know we have the expertise in key areas of the Welsh economy such as tech and energy, and we are already developing links with local businesses in these sectors. These links have also meant we've made connections in Dublin, and we have collaborated with Jeanne Kelly, Ciaran Markey and Darragh Killeen from our Dublin office, at events in Dublin which were a part of Welsh Government's St David's Day celebrations.

It's a very exciting time for Wales generally, with significant energy and regeneration projects in the pipeline, the recently announced Freeports projects and significant inward investment ambitions from the Welsh Government, Western Gateway and Cardiff Capital Region. Cardiff is a vibrant and ever-growing city and the office will place us right in the middle of all that is happening now and in the coming years.

**Tim:** There's also an increase in divergence in the law that's being made in Wales for Wales. The Welsh Government have pushed the boundaries on their environmental and sustainability legislation, and we are likely to see similar ambition in its legislative programmes in the future. It is imperative therefore that if you want to advise Welsh clients in Wales, you need to understand that Wales is different, and that its laws are also different. We fully appreciate this and know that our clients greatly value that knowledge. Opening the office will enable us to build on our already excellent understanding of the Welsh legal landscape.

## Tell us about the space itself?

**Tim:** The office is located on Park Place, an area of the city centre with a strong legal tradition. The premises have been completely refurbished with an open plan working area, meeting rooms and breakout spaces. We have drawn on experience from our recent Manchester, Birmingham and Exeter office moves, and our opening in Dublin last June, to create a modern and inviting office in keeping with our new brand, albeit with a distinctly Welsh flavour.

**Laura:** We're right in the heart of the civic centre, but also ideally located for a number of our key clients.

## What does Browne Jacobson bring to the Welsh legal market?

**Laura:** As well as our legal specialisms in key growth areas for the Welsh economy, a key differentiator for us is our leading position on equity, diversity and inclusion and social mobility issues. We're proud of our credentials and we are keen to collaborate with businesses and public sector organisations in Wales to share the experiences of our D&I journey and learn from each other.

**Tim:** Social mobility is something close to my heart. I know how difficult it can be to get to where you want to be and believe you should be, and the challenges faced by those at the beginning of their careers in Wales. We are keen to share our knowledge and experience with the aim of showing that where you're from and who you know doesn't have to dictate how successful you are in life. We are already working with Welsh Government in this regard and are keen to explore opportunities with other organisations and businesses on this important issue.

## Tell us a bit about the background to the Wales-based team. What attracted you to Browne Jacobson, Tim?

**Tim:** Prior to joining the firm, I was an in-house lawyer at Welsh Government. Ben Standing came on secondment to the team I was in and from working with Ben I got to understand a little about the firm, along with the type of work that the public law team was doing, both of which appealed to me. I believed that with a local presence there was a big opportunity for the firm to generate additional work and further embed ourselves in the Welsh market.

I was one of the first people the firm hired on a fully remote basis. Browne Jacobson took the time to get to a place where we all knew it would work from the beginning, spending time to understand each other and our aspirations and vision for Wales.

It's without doubt the best thing that I've done in my career. The way that we've worked together to get to this point where we've opened an office here, based on the work that we're doing to be near our clients in the area; the team that we've got around us, and more generally as the public law team; and the type of work we've expanded into is absolutely fantastic. It's going from strength to strength and will only continue to grow as a result of opening the office.

**Laura:** We recruited Tim because we thought he was someone who could grow into a leadership role in Wales and it's absolutely proved to be the case. I'm delighted that he is our Head of Office for Cardiff and couldn't ask for a better person to work with in Wales. Tim has local contacts and obviously knows Welsh Government well. His relationships complemented those already held by the firm. Combining our contacts and knowledge has meant we have been able to deepen our understanding of the Welsh and Cardiff markets and deepen our relationships with a number of key clients.

The business community in South Wales is very tight knit and it makes a huge difference to be physically present in this market, growing our connections and being an active member of the community.

## What's the long-term vision for the office?

**Laura:** We so excited about our future in Wales, and so proud to be already working on some major projects which are key to the Welsh economy. We want to continue to work on projects, and with clients, who are integral to Wales' future. We also want to work with clients and contacts on Diversity and Inclusion and Social Mobility in the Welsh Market as these are things we are passionate about and where we are confident of the difference we can make. We expect to grow over the next couple of years and so if anyone in the law in Wales is interested in what we have said, we'd encourage them to get in touch to discuss opportunities with Browne Jacobson LLP.

**Tim:** The sky's the limit! Ymlaen!

## Key contacts



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