



Click with charities

Shivaji Shiva reviews a selection of useful sites for charity lawyers

The Charity Commission

www.charitycommission.gov.uk

The Charity Commission site is the starting point for any list of charity-related websites. It was recently revamped to reflect the new branding of the Commission. Many visitors will have been bemused by the novel lime green t-shirt logo which apparently "signifie[d] a more

- updates on the most recent developments in charity law
- reports on inquiries conducted by the Commission
- guidance on charity law and good practice

The Active Communities Unit at the Home Office

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/active/charitylaw/#1

The long-awaited Charities Bill fell when Parliament was dissolved. It was reintroduced by the Government following the general election and many in the sector have high hopes for it. The proposed reforms result from many years of hard work



www.charitycommission.gov.uk

in-touch, modern and empowering organisation, working at the heart of society". The site has, for the moment, been restored to its previous style and its functional no-nonsense nature remains. However, the new branding is likely to reappear and further functional changes are promised to accompany the 'Click with the Commission' programme. Proposed changes include a range of online services including an online charity registration process. Meanwhile, the site has been improved in more incremental ways by, for example, streamlining the home page.

You can judge for yourself whether the site supports the Commission's claim to be "re-focusing, re-structuring and sharpening up in the way it works".

- Key features include:
- online access to the Central Register of Charities

by voluntary sector experts and address legal problems that regularly cause unnecessary uncertainty and expense to charities.

It would be a genuine loss to the sector if that work were squandered. The Active Communities Unit website provides a useful summary of the Bill's main elements and information on its progress. It also includes links to other resources on charity law reform such as the new Community Interest Company.

FSA – Industrial and Provident societies

www.fsa.gov.uk

One of the pleasures of charity law is the opportunity of working regularly with a variety of legal entities. The FSA is the registering authority for industrial and provident societies which register under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965. This includes

charitable industrial and provident societies which are exempt from the requirement to register with the Charity Commission.

The FSA took over the regulation of industrial and provident societies relatively recently.

The website gives the impression that this role is distinctly secondary to the FSA's regulation of the financial services industry. It is very difficult to locate the section of the site dealing with societies. It is, however, worth making the effort. A substantial body of information including guidance notes and forms can be found at: www.fsa.gov.uk/Pages/Doing/Info/MSR/Societies/index.shtml

Privy Council Office: Royal Charters

www.privycouncil.org.uk/output/page26.asp

A large number of charities, in particular, many professional institutions, are established by Royal Charter. You will rarely be required to apply for or amend a Royal Charter. But if you are, this site will provide a useful introduction to the procedure. It also provides an interesting introduction to the background of Royal Charters, which have a history dating back to the 13th century.

The information is presented in a clear, up to date and generally well-designed manner which contradicts the fusty image that mentions of Royal Charters and the Privy Council might prompt.



www.makepovertyhistory.org

Make Poverty History

www.makepovertyhistory.org/

As political leaders gathered in Scotland for the G8 Summit, tens of thousands of others gathered in Edinburgh on 2 July demanding trade justice, debt cancellation, and more and better aid for the world's poorest countries.

A wide range of development charities and others have united in support of the 'Make Poverty History' campaign. This striking and well-designed site provides you with a concise and effective



www.privycouncil.org.uk

introduction to the coalition's manifesto for change, links to further information – including details of legal barriers to fair trade – and an opportunity to sign up for regular updates. You may even have decided to go to Edinburgh yourself.

If you would like any more information in this, or indeed any other matter, then please contact:
James Sinclair Taylor
020 8394 6480
james.sinclair@russell-cooke.co.uk