



**2 February 2015**

**The Times – letters to the editor**

Sir,

The Government is hiking some court fees by more than 600 per cent this April, spelling disaster for access to justice.

Our members - business representatives, commercial lawyers and legal professionals representing the public - are hugely concerned that people will be priced out of the courts and small businesses will be saddled with debts that they are unable to recover.

The increase risks damaging the UK's reputation as a global leader in commercial dispute resolution. Our competitors in New York and Singapore will seem much more attractive to those making commercial claims.

Most of our warnings to the government in its 2013 consultation have not been heeded. Worse still, the government held a private consultation in December 2014 to which none of our organisations or our members were allowed to respond. The very people who will be affected by these draconian changes were gagged from giving advice or opinion.

The Government has made its decision on scant evidence and with no regard for the impact its changes will have on the fundamental right for individuals to seek redress through the courts and businesses to recover monies they are owed.

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We call on the Government to reconsider its decision and revise its proposals based on evidence.

Andrew Caplen – president, Law Society

Alistair MacDonald QC – chairman, Bar Council

Frances Edwards – president, Chartered Institute of Legal Executives

Nick Parsons – president, Forum of Insurance Lawyers

John Spencer – president, Association of Personal Injury Lawyers

Penelope Reed QC – chairwoman, Chancery Bar Association