

AP303

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APIL'S NEW PRESIDENT FIRES WARNING SHOT AT INSURERS

Insurers are dragging the legal system back to the "bad old days of hired guns", APIL's incoming president will warn this week.

In a hard hitting speech, Richard Langton will tell delegates at the association's annual conference that shareholders are the centre of insurers' universe, and that insurers have a "...powerful incentive to reduce damages awards and cut out legal representation wherever possible."

Commenting on the Association of British Insurers' Care and Compensation proposals, Langton will say "the ABI has, in the last few months, plunged to new depths in espousing its vision. In its brave new world, lawyers are included only as a sign off once a deal has been struck. They have come up with a startling new proposition that they should have three months to investigate and make a decision on liability. Revolutionary! That's only been a rule of law for the last six years."

Langton will say costs have increased because in almost two thirds of cases, defendants fail to comply with the CPR timetable on admissions. "We know improvements can be made," he will say. "We must examine..what behaviour needs to change, what procedures can be streamlined and what duplication can be driven out." Langton will also stress the importance of meaningful sanctions for non-compliance.

The association will continue to campaign to stop current Government plans to save money by "denying financial awards to the victims of violent crime. The state must accept responsibility for its inability to protect innocent citizens," he will tell delegates.

Langton will also address the current debate surrounding the possible increase to the small claims court limit which, if implemented, will "...cut out the vast majority of claimants..hundreds of thousands who currently get compensation would struggle or be denied."

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Note to editors:

APIL's annual conference will take place at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 April.

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