

## Chambers UK 2012

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## A Client's Guide to the Legal Profession

### Administrative & Public Law

This "*committed and enthusiastic*" public law team is best known for its work in the education sector. It advises a number of grammar schools on admissions criteria and pupil transfer arrangements. Other notable recent highlights include successfully defending a judicial review application on behalf of the Remission of Sentence Commissioners. Solicitors also advised the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority over an application for judicial review.

**Client Service** "*A committed practice with a close regard for delivering top service.*"

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Karen Blair](#) is recognised by sources for her grasp of planning and environmental-related public law.

### Banking & Finance

This firm has substantial expertise in advising a solid client base of lenders on acquisition finance, property finance and securitisations. The team has also been involved in a significant number of mortgage portfolio securitisations and acquisitions. It recently advised HSBC in relation to £8 million loan and credit facilities provided for Sam Hagan Leisure. Other major bank clients include RBS and Bank of Ireland.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Stephen Cross](#) heads the banking team at the firm. "*While we are all losing our heads, he doesn't get distracted,*" notes one client. [John Kirk](#)'s "*resourceful and thorough*" approach wins praise from interviewees. He concentrates on asset finance and securitisation transactions.

### Construction

This firm has developed a market-leading offering on both contentious and non-contentious construction issues and is regularly sought out by both contractors and developers with interests in the region. Clients appreciate the rapidity and efficiency of the team's work and the close relationship it fosters with them. It is often engaged on leading projects in Northern Ireland, with recent clients including Harcourt Construction on the Titanic Signature Project, and the Lyric Theatre on the development of its new theatre.

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**KEY INDIVIDUALS** Practice head [Patrick Fleming](#) draws praise from clients for the "**practical experience that he brings to bear.**" He balances both contentious and non-contentious elements in his practice and is noted for the manner in which "**he gets to the heart of a matter very quickly.**"

## Corporate & M&A

This firm maintains a good presence in the corporate market in Northern Ireland, and assists clients with a range of acquisitions, disposals and restructurings. In recent highlights the team advised CJ Higgins & Company on the sale of its £1 million insurance business to Giles Insurers Brokers, and advised the Bryson Charitable Group on its corporate restructuring. Clients say the firm's work is of excellent quality, and appreciate its solicitors' good judgement.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** Experienced corporate partner [Scott Kennedy](#) also heads the firm's IP rights and technology team. He is popular with clients, one of whom enthuses that he is "**everything you'd want your solicitor to be – he gives good, honest, level-headed advice, and I value his judgement.**"

## Dispute Resolution

Cleaver Fulton Rankin has established itself as a key player on property, construction, probate and insurance litigation. The team "**always makes itself available**" and is "**very good at building client relationships.**" Key clients include B&Q and HSBC.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Jonathan Forrester](#) is highly accomplished in the handling of real estate litigation and probate disputes, and is also trained in ADR and mediation. He recently represented Titanic Quarter Limited in a multimillion-pound case seeking specific performance of agreements for a lease related to a large waterfront development.

## Education

This firm's renowned education team provides advice to a range of educational bodies including schools, colleges, a university and the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland. Over the past year it has handled work encompassing pensions, employment, property and disciplinary matters, as well as freedom of information law.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** Michael Black is the key contact.

## Employment

This team advises on tribunal claims and projects. Its clients include large companies and public sector bodies, and it has a healthy niche acting for education sector bodies. Clients rate the responsive service: "**They provide good client service and deal with matters extremely quickly.**" Notable clients include Invest Northern Ireland, Lindsay Cars and The Open University.

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**KEY INDIVIDUALS** The "*highly strategic and helpful*" [Michael Black](#) is rated for his advice on commercial transactions and on tribunal claims. [Aisling Byrne](#) is "*able to understand problems quickly and comes up with practical ways of approaching them.*"

## Energy & Natural Resources

This team has been handling numerous significant renewables matters of late, in addition to advising more conventional energy and utilities suppliers. Highlights include providing counsel to a major energy company on the expected impact of the Hydrocarbons Licensing Directive Regulations.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** The "*excellent and always prepared*" [Stephen Cross](#) heads the department. He focuses on renewable energy production, particularly wind power, and has recently assisted SSE Renewables in its drive to purchase further suitable wind turbine sites.

## Environment

This practice holds a prominent position in Northern Ireland's compact environment market for both advisory and contentious matters. The group regularly handles issues relating to the waste and energy sectors, and recently defended a skip hire company against charges brought by the Environment Agency. The team was also key to the defence of an oil reprocessing plant against a contaminated land suit, while other highlights include representing the buyer of a wind farm and the operators of Kilroot Power Station.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Karen Blair](#) is an eminent environmental practitioner in Northern Ireland, and heads up this department. She is extremely well known in the sector and wins praise from market sources, who say: "*She is personable with her clients and really knows her way around the law.*" Her recent practice has ranged from advising district councils on new landfill regulatory controls to giving ongoing advice on the public inquiry surrounding Belfast City Airport's potential runway extension.

## Family/Matrimonial

This highly regarded team offers a comprehensive family law service to its clients. Recently the group has handled a number of high-value financial provision disputes as well as both international and domestic child abduction cases.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [William Cross](#) is acknowledged in the market as "*the out-and-out specialist in Hague Convention proceedings.*" He is particularly well known for this niche international child abduction work, but is also capable of handling a range of work relating to separations and divorces.

## Intellectual Property

Cleaver Fulton Rankin has a real focus on IP and IT matters, and is forging an impressive reputation for work spanning these two areas. Its notable clients include Hewlett-Packard and Northern Ireland Science Park, and it has also recently assisted Bryson Recycling on the terms of a patent licence and

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collaboration agreement relating to the use of new technology in the recyclable waste sector. Interviewees highlight the firm's commitment to customer service, and praise its solicitors' **"attention to detail and thorough knowledge of the IP sector."**

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** Scott Kennedy heads the team.

## Licensing

This firm acts extensively for administrators, insolvency practitioners, hotel chains and an increasing number of tourism development companies. The team is currently advising Premier Inn on a proposed hotel in Titanic Quarter Belfast, as well as providing advice on the licensing aspects of the development of Titanic Signature Project in Belfast Harbour. It also advises clients on licensing for conference centres, as well as providing broader planning, property and governance advice.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Karen Blair](#) is praised by commentators for the quality of her work in licensing, which is complemented by her widely recognised planning expertise.

## Planning

This group's comprehensive depth of experience has an emphasis on waste and energy matters, and it is regularly instructed in a number of the region's most significant issues. Clients are quick to praise the team's **"incredible work ethic."**

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** Team leader [Karen Blair](#)'s multidisciplinary practice provides **"an advantage in any matter"** due to her **"all-encompassing approach."** [Maria O'Loan](#) has vast experience working with both public and private sector clients, and of late she has been busy acting for both applicants and respondents in judicial review proceedings.

## Private Client

This growing team engages in estate administration, wills, inheritance and capital gains tax advice, and trusts work. The team has a strong care for the vulnerable service and has vast experience making applications for enduring powers of attorney and before the Office of Protection.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Alastair Rankin](#) is considered **"one of the best trusts experts in Northern Ireland."** Clients warm to his empathetic personality and his efficient work ethic. [Michael Graham](#) has **"great expertise on wills and trusts."** His reputation is growing fast and he is a prominent fixture on the provincial legal landscape.

## Real Estate

Cleaver Fulton Rankin has a strong background in major residential and commercial developments, with continuing instructions in this area. The practice has growing expertise in retail, recently advising on a shopping centre purchase and representing a UK institutional investor in the acquisition of Shore Road retail park in Belfast. In the charity sector, the team acts for Age NI and Mind Wise New Vision.

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**Client Service** *"The team has always been there, even at very short notice - their reaction time is excellent."*

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** Head of property [Kathryn Collie](#) is valued for her professionalism and **"prompt response"** to correspondence. She is always **"happy to discuss issues and explore options."** [James Houston](#) has a strong developer-based clientele and has been instructed on a number of deals in relation to waterfront development Titanic Quarter.

### **Real Estate Litigation**

This group handles adjudication arbitration, mediation and litigation at all levels, from the County Court and Lands Tribunal to the High Court and Court of Appeal, and over the last year it has been instructed in a number of high-value dilapidations claims. Clients include O2, McCormick Properties and HSBC.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Jonathan Forrester](#) is renowned for his aptitude at complex, high-value contentious property matters.

### **Restructuring/Insolvency**

Cleaver Fulton Rankin continues to field a well-regarded corporate restructuring and insolvency practice in the region acting for banks and insolvency practitioners. The team was instructed to act on behalf of Aer Aran after it was placed into a high-profile examinership in the Republic of Ireland.

**KEY INDIVIDUALS** [Jeanette Donohoe](#) is a firm favourite with clients, who say she is **"knowledgeable, practical and always available."** She leads the restructuring and insolvency practice at the firm.

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