



## THE LAW LORDS Spotlight on Birketts

# Birketts expands premises and strengthens teams to enhance its regional, national and global influence

As a full service firm with offices across the Eastern region, Birketts occupies a premier position for its range of capability, level of expertise and depth of experience.

The breadth of property and corporate deals, alongside private client work, continues to impress and the law firm reported a 10 per cent rise in annual turnover to a record £39.2 million for the last financial year.

The property and corporate divisions were again strong performers, growing by 21 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, while private client grew by a further eight per cent.

As a result, industry-recognition has been forthcoming. Hot-on-the-heels of being named the 'Private Client Firm of the Year (Regional)' at The Legal 500 UK Awards 2015, Birketts was a finalist in the 'Regional Law Firm of the Year' category at The Lawyer Awards 2016.

Corporate deals that Birketts has advised on have reached an impressive aggregate value in excess of £550m in the last 12 months.

Notable transactions include advising Palletforce on its £30m sale to an international private equity firm, being instructed by the Medisafe Group on its £27m sale to US-based Steris and advising Ncase Limited on its international exit to the SFS Group.

The team's reputation for building strong, multi-skilled teams delivering specific industry expertise is also evidenced in recent transactions such as Toplevel Computing (technology), Talbot Timber (a family-owned business) and Lifestyle Europe motor dealer group (motor retail).

Although the Corporate team often grabs the headlines, Birketts has one of the largest dedicated Property teams within any UK law firm. The team advises on all aspects of the construction and property industry.

Strong Commercial, Agricultural and Residential Property teams in each of its four offices are supported by specialist Planning, Environmental, Construction and Property Litigation colleagues.

The team has been involved in some of the largest strategic land schemes in East Anglia and is fast gaining a national reputation in this specialist area.

Birketts' international work is perhaps less well-known but the firm has rightly built a first-rate reputation for its shipping and international trade work in the region which continues to match its London rivals.

The team's turnover has grown by a staggering 40 per cent in the past six years, over 90 per cent of which is generated by overseas clients.

Daden Hunt, a partner in the firm's Chelmsford office, chairs the International Advisory Group (IAG) which gives clients the added advantage of reliable, fast, seamless advisers around the



Senior partners Nigel Farthing (left) with James Austin



A computer generated image of the Birketts' new Ipswich headquarters



Key members of Birketts' Franchising team (left to right): Andrew Ridout, Sarah Lewis, Rob Tiffen, Vicki Mitman, Ed Savory, Kitty Rosser and Nellie Jackson

world. In May 2017, Birketts will host 100 delegates at the IAG annual conference in Cambridge.

As one would expect, Birketts has continued to attract and secure a number of key appointments in the last year and now has a total headcount in excess of 530.

Lorna Townsend joined the firm's Employment team as an investigations and employee relations consultant, uniquely placed to investigate workplace matters on clients' behalf.

Nellie Jackson (senior associate) was appointed to strengthen the firm's specialist Intellectual Property team and Ed Savory (legal director) joined the team bringing with him his nationally recognised expertise in franchising and Birketts is now an affiliate member of the British Franchise Association. Additionally, the firm's Health and Safety team has recruited three former HSE Inspectors to provide a specialist niche service to its corporate clients in relation to audits and risk assessments.

A number of other senior appointments have been made during the last year including Richard Guy (Private Client), Susan

Chadwick (Planning), Julie Hoy (Commercial Property), Andrea Curtis (Corporate) and Claudia Haisman-Green (Commercial Property).

Having outgrown the Cambridge office space last year and moved to new premises in November 2015, the firm has now turned its attention to a new headquarters and work is now

well underway on the 50,000 sq ft premises in Princes Street, Ipswich.

Birketts expects to take occupancy in spring 2018, a move which will allow the business to improve efficiencies and communication, while providing enough space to fulfil its ambitious growth plans.

There have also been a number

of internal changes. The firm announced the appointment of James Austin as senior partner in June 2016. James takes over from Nigel Farthing who has stepped down from the role after 10 years.

Laurence Weeks was appointed head of Commercial Litigation in February 2016, a role he now undertakes as well as continuing to lead the firm's Restructuring and Insolvency team; Stefan Harris-Wright (Construction) was promoted from senior associate to partner in August 2016.

The official launch of the firm's 'CLEAR' client care programme identifies Birketts' shared commitment to quality and consistently outstanding client service through a number of guiding principles and indicative behaviours. Consequently, the top 100 law firm is well down the path towards being recognised as the pre-eminent law firm in the eastern region for client services.

Jonathan Agar, chief executive officer at Birketts, said: "These appointments, office expansion and team growth are markers of Birketts' intention to continue to build and sustain a business that is recognised as a leading regional law firm offering London-quality services at a fraction of the costs, to clients locally, nationally and from around the world."



Some of the Birketts partners with CEO Jonathan Agar (centre) at the company's Cambridge premises