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News Release

A public court serving public law and beyond: Supreme Court's third Annual Report and Accounts published

The UK's highest court today looks back on a year which continued to see a large number of public law cases in the courtroom – both among those cases where permission to appeal was sought, and those proceeding to a full hearing – and which saw efforts strengthened to reach a wider public outside the courtroom.

The Supreme Court's Annual Report and Accounts were laid before Parliament earlier today and have been published on the court's website this afternoon.

The document notes that just under 250 applications for permission to appeal were made to the Supreme Court over the last financial year, and around 230 were considered by the Justices over the same period. Overall, the rate of applications granted permission to appeal has fallen slightly against 2010-11, although it is too early to say whether this is a discernable trend. A broad analysis of the court's incoming pipeline of cases where permission to appeal has been granted this year suggests an increasing number relating to extradition and employment law, and fewer cases involving immigration or planning matters.

The Annual Report – the third in the court's history and the first also to fully cover the activities of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) – reviews the past financial year's work and highlights some of the most important and interesting cases the Court has heard, as well as covering a range of educational and outreach work.

In her introduction, Jenny Rowe, Chief Executive of the Supreme Court, says the document "presents a picture of how we have navigated considerable changes in the court's administration over the year," with a number of key staff and judicial changes, the integration of the administration of the JCPC, and the reviewing of several major service contracts.

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

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The Annual Report and Accounts show that the Supreme Court and JCPC cost approximately £13m to run in 2011/12 (more than 40% of which was judicial and staff costs), and recouped almost £7m in court fees, contributions from the UK court services, and other income. While operating costs have remained broadly flat between the last two financial years, the total expenditure figure reflects downward revaluation of various assets – an anticipated factor – which accounts for more than £600,000 of the increased overall costs of the court.

The Report explains how the court has welcomed almost 75,000 visitors in the last twelve months, including almost 320 groups from schools and colleges. It notes how the number of educational visits from institutions outside London and the South East has risen over the past year, and how the court has enhanced its exhibition area with new material.

Significant growth in virtual visitors to the Supreme Court and JCPC websites is also noted – more than 390,000 distinct online visitors were recorded over the course of the year – partly attributed to the court's engagement with Twitter and the live streaming of court proceedings through its partnership with the Sky News website.

Other sections of the document report on the annual staff survey, which showed high levels of staff engagement; on the continuing work towards efficiencies in the amount of paper consumed during appeal hearings by introducing more electronic working; and on the ongoing drive to reduce energy usage within the court building.

The report also lists the significant degree of engagement with overseas visitors and jurisdictions to develop appropriate relationships with courts in Europe, the Commonwealth and beyond, to deepen and broaden a shared understanding of common law jurisprudence and to share good practice in the development of the independent judiciary as an essential pillar of state.

Writing in his last foreword as President of the Supreme Court, Lord Phillips says: “It has been both an honour and a pleasure to be the first President of the UKSC. Much has been achieved since the move from Parliament in October 2009 to create an institution which is a worthy successor to the Law Lords.

“Having been freed from the constraints of Parliamentary rules, we have been able to look afresh at the way the Justices do their work and have introduced some different ways of working.”

Lord Phillips concludes his introduction by thanking Jenny Rowe and the rest of the court staff, who “not only help the Justices in our everyday tasks, but also seek to buttress and support the independence of the Judges of the highest court in the United Kingdom.”

Ends

Notes to editors

The Annual Report and Accounts can be viewed online at:
<http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/news/annual-report.html>

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