

# LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

## iNSIDER

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT'S HOT (AND WHAT'S NOT) IN LAW OFFICE SYSTEMS

In association with



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## KAYE IN NEW VIDEO LINK INITIATIVE

**North London solicitor and law office technology entrepreneur Michael Kaye last week launched a new video conferencing initiative aimed at barristers' chambers and smaller firms of solicitors who want to be able to cut out some of the travelling currently associated with their legal work.**

According to Kaye, a long-time advocate of speech recognition systems, as well as a major backer of the recently launched NKT interactive internet service, what lawyers really want from video conferencing are not the desktop PC computing features but the ability to have face-to-face meetings with counsel and clients without the hassle of travel.

As an example Kaye cites the experiences of criminal lawyers within his own firm Kaye Tesler & Co. At the moment attending a conference with counsel in the Temple involves a two hour round trip, which on legal aid is chargeable at only two-thirds standard rate. By contrast, with video conferencing there is no travelling (nor the inevitable catching up to do when you return to the office) so the lawyer can spend that time working at a higher chargeable rate.

Michael Kaye has now formed a company called Video Conferencing for Lawyers to promote the venture and one of its first customers is a Bristol set of chambers. Although the set currently wins most of its work from local law firms who do not want to travel to London to see counsel, tenants realised this work could be lost if London sets could offer local solicitors the convenience of a video link - so they decided to buy it first! ➔

➔ In terms of technology, VCL has adopted the keep-it-simple approach of dedicated video conferencing systems rather than linking it to high powered PCs. Two hardware options will be available: a *set top box* that allows users to conduct a video conference through a conventional television set and a smaller videophone for one-to-one use.

Both systems are manufactured by Motion Media Technology of Bristol and support the H.320 industry standard, so they can communicate with compatible systems from other suppliers. The set top box retails for approximately £3500, while the videophone price is £1500. The videophone offers 15 frames per second quality as opposed to the 5 frames per second of some other systems. Users also need to install an ISDN2 line although this can then be used for other tasks, such as internet access.

☞ **Comment...** The VCL venture had a flying start last week when the company was able to provide a video conference link between the Chambers of Anthony Arlidge QC, who were holding a reception to mark their move from 5 King's Bench Walk to new premises at 18 Red Lion Court, and Sir Frederick Lawton, the retired Court of Appeal judge and one of the set's original founder members, who now lives in Yorkshire and at 86-years-old was unable to make the journey to London for the reception. ☐

## STOP PRESS - NORWEL IN THEODORE GODDARD DEAL

Norwel Computer Services has just signed contracts with Theodore Goddard to supply the firm with a new practice management system, EIS software and 250 fee earner desktop licences. ☐

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### Peapod and MCS in row

A row that has been rumbling throughout the summer between legal systems suppliers MCS and Peapod Solutions, has now erupted into litigation with MCS taking out a High Court writ against Peapod over the alleged sale of an unlicensed copy of MCS's DPS case management software.

Ian Wimbush of Peapod said his company would "vigorously defend" the action as it forms part of a larger commercial dispute with MCS over support for the DPS product.

➡ Although now no longer a DPS distributor, Peapod will also continue to supply and support its Print-Form electronic forms software on the DPS system.

**Niche firm to computerise**  
Niche property law practice Jeffrey Myers & Co in Leeds is to install Linetime's Practice II accounts system.

### WEB-ENABLED SYSTEMS - THE NEXT BIG THING ?

**Are web-enabled systems allowing clients varying degrees of direct access about to become the next big thing in legal software design?**

Over the last six months a number of leading suppliers of case and practice management systems have introduced enhancements to allow third-parties, typically existing clients, to access selected financial and matter information via a web browser and an internet/intranet/extranet link. But, as far as L*Ti* can ascertain, the number of law firms actually offering direct access today – as distinct from just talking about it – are still very few.

Interestingly, one of the latest firms to go "live" with a web-enabled system is not a big "City" practice but Manchester-based solicitors Stephen Baker & Co, which has just bought and installed the NKT Interactive system (see L*Ti* 36 for first report). This was developed by NKT Computers Consultants (☎ 0181 802 6817) and uses secure server technology so what would otherwise be a promotional web site can support actual business transactions.

Stephen Baker & Co will be using NKT as part of its existing accident claims and personal injury practice, so prospective clients can not only learn about the firm's services but also complete and submit online claims forms and instructions to commence legal proceedings.

Explaining his decision to go on the internet, Stephen Baker said: "Although we are located in the suburbs, by building up first a local and then a regional reputation for our accident claims work, over the past three years we have expanded from just a single lawyer to a practice with a total of 30 staff, including a team of six solicitors. Much of our work comes from referrals and we are confident that by establishing a ➡

➡ presence on the web, we will increase the volume of work we can attract on a national basis."

Mr Baker also believes the timing of the new web venture is important as it means the firm will have already built up the expertise and internal processes for handling online legal claims by the time the internet becomes a truly mass market medium in the UK.

"Today people look in a local newspaper or a telephone directory to find a solicitors practice. In the future, they will be surfing the Net to look for lawyers – and we intend to be the first firm they encounter," says Baker. The firm's web site is at <http://www.uklaw.net/baker/>

➡ The role of web-enabling technology in case management work is one of the main themes that will be explored at the *Litigate '97* conference in London on 26th November. The event is sponsored by **Legal Technology Insider** and speakers include representatives from Davies Arnold Cooper and Dibb Lupton Alsop, as well as leading legal IT suppliers Axxia Systems, Laserform Law, Solicitec and Hatton Blue. For registration details call ☎ 0181 445 8060. □

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### NEW SHOW CONFIRMS OFFICIAL SPONSOR

As predicted in an earlier issue, the new *Solicitors National Legal Office & Legal Services Exhibition*, scheduled to take place at the National Exhibition Centre near Birmingham on 3rd-to-5th March 1998, will be sponsored by the *Law Society's Gazette*. However, it also appears that legal IT suppliers Axxia, Quill and Peapod have not yet firmly committed themselves to the event. Robert Ewin of organisers Nationwide Exhibitions told L*Ti* he did not "at the moment" have an exhibitors' list and added he "did not see the event as a rival" to existing shows, such as SOLEX, but as a more geographically convenient alternative. □

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### LOTUS NOTES BOUNCES BACK

**Eighteen months ago the Lotus Notes system was being written off as dead in the water. Today, not only are more law firms using it but there has also been a steady increase in the number of software products available.**

The latest Notes system to come onto the market is a case management and litigation support application called CaseWorks. This was developed in the United States by the software house Legal Information Technologies and is now being distributed and supported in the UK through the London office of Interliant, another US company. Interliant say the software is currently being evaluated by three London law firms.

The London office is located at 75 Cannon Street, EC4N 5BN (☎ 0171 556 7050) and along with CaseWorks, the company is also distributing a rentable groupware facility based on the Lotus Instant!TEAMROOM system. In effect this allows subscribers to take advantage of a Lotus Notes environment for about £10 per month, per user. Interliant reckon it would be useful for law firms who need to collaborate with clients on projects on an ad hoc basis. Further details can be found at <http://www.interliant.com/teamroom>

On the user side of the equation Duncan Finlyson, the managing director of the 50 + strong LawNet group of law firms, reports that not only is demand for Lotus Notes based databases growing within the UK but they have also been asked to develop them for Danish and Norwegian lawyers.

☞ **Comment...** Along with Interliant, other companies offering Lotus Notes based products and services include: JFS Litigator's Notebook from BSG Legal Solutions (☎ 0171 390 8718), CASEnotes case management system from Nexus Technology (☎ 01276 686900), John Hemming's JHC operation (☎ 0121 605☛

☛ 0808) and the wide range of current legal awareness services now available from Sweet & Maxwell's Legal Information Resources (☎ 01422 888000) subsidiary.

Lotus Development has itself just announced the availability of new Notes, intranet and web related products, including: the Lotus Notes 4.6 client, Lotus Domino Mail 4.6 server, Lotus Domino 4.6 server and the Lotus Notes Designer for Domino 4.6 application development tool.

Lotus say the new 4.6 products, which also now offer integration with Microsoft's Office and Internet Explorer 3/4 software, will help improve end-user productivity, facilitate development of collaborative web applications, support a wider range of internet email standards and simplify set-up and configuration. Free trial versions of the 4.6 products are available for download at <http://www.lotus.com/notes> ☐

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### WINDOWS 98 WILL BE THE LAST IN SERIES

At its recent professional developers conference in San Diego, Microsoft finally confirmed what many people had been suspecting for a number of months, namely that Windows 98 will be the last product in the 9.x family and that from 1999 there will only be one operating system for both consumer and business users: Windows NT Workstation.

☞ **Comment...** Microsoft now describes Windows NT 5.0 as a "superset of Windows 98" and in fact the latest beta versions of the products share identical front ends. Microsoft is also stressing NT 5.0 has been designed to cut the "total cost of ownership" by incorporating features making it easier and cheaper to support across large PC networks.

For law firms and IT suppliers (as distinct from stand alone/home users) the implication seems to be that if you are currently running Windows 3.1 or 95, forget 98 and go straight to NT 5.0. ☐

### Five go "live" with AIM

**By the end of this month five more solicitors practices will have gone "live" with AIM's Evolution practice management system.**

**The firms are: Elliot Mather Smith, an ex Miles 33 site in Chesterfield, Cartmell Shepherd, whose principal office is in Carlisle, Trumans of Nottingham and Grantham, McCormicks of Harrogate and Leeds, and one of the largest firms in Ipswich, Gotelee Goldsmith.**

☞ **The addition of these five firms takes the total number of AIM Evolution sites to 99 "live" installations. AIM describes the state of its order book as "impressive" and points out that while many of the Evolution orders are upgrades from existing users, over half the 99 sites are new names to AIM.**

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### Litigation support news

☞ Two years ago proceedings in the Maxwell fraud trial were enlivened by the use of the ShowCase multi-media presentation system. Now Legal Technologies (☎ 0171 935 8242), the company that has exclusive rights to the system in Europe, has launched TrialPro, a new Windows (95 or 3.1) version of the software. Chris Baldwin of Legal Technologies says a major benefit of the new system is it makes it easier to prepare and edit presentations. TrialPro can be purchased for an annual licence of £3000 or hired for a single trial.

☞ Forensic computing specialists Vagon and Authentec have merged to form Vagon International (☎ 01869 355255). The new company will continue to focus on recovering data from computer media where files have been lost or, in the case of fraud, deliberately erased.

### EMAIL - THE FIVE DEADLY SINS

During the summer Legal Technology Insider conducted an informal survey into the use of email by both law firms and legal IT suppliers. Unfortunately this revealed five common failings which would seem to suggest too many people are still living in the fountain pen era of law office automation...

**Deadly Sin No. 1 - No email** Despite the fact you can now obtain an email address for very little money (it is still free on Link, so there really is no excuse) there are still plenty of firms (and a worrying number of IT suppliers) without an email address.

**Deadly Sin No. 2 - Have email but don't know the correct address** Having no email is bad enough but this is indefensible - it is the digital equivalent of not knowing your phone or DX number. And note we say "correct" address. With the exception of a few law firm receptionists who seemed to think an email address was something to be kept confidential at all costs, most people were happy to give out their email address - unfortunately it was frequently the wrong one.

It may be a chore to remember but getting all those dots, dashes, under-scores and @ signs in the right order really is important. And "yes" at least three IT suppliers have been carrying incorrect email addresses on advertising and promotional material in recent months.

**Deadly Sin No. 3 - Have email but don't know how to use it properly** The problem here is *attachments*. It may sound simple enough to attach a file to an email message but with so many different email systems in use on so many different hardware platforms, unless you have some understanding of such dark arts as file formats (Word 97 attachments can be a problem if not saved as a Word 6.0 ➔

☞ file), MIME, BinHex, and Uuencode Data Forks, there is a good chance all you will succeed in doing is sending a file full of indecipherable gobbledygook.

**LTi** pet hates include people who attach files but don't know what format they are in, so they cannot help you decode them. And, attachments which, when finally deciphered and opened, turn out to be so short and/or trivial that they could have been incorporated within the main body of the email message.

**Deadly Sin No. 4 - Have email but not throughout the organisation** The typical scenario here is that although an organisation claims to have email, it is in fact limited to one enthusiast who accesses the internet from a stand alone PC (in some instances a PC at home) so communications are dependent upon messages being printed off and physically placed at the top of the "in pile" on the recipient's desk. This approach to the information superhighway is about as popular with other users as getting caught behind a Reliant Robin hauling a caravan up a steep hill.

**Deadly Sin No. 5 - Have email but never check it** Unlike conventional post, there are no set times of the day for the delivery of email. This is why keen email users log-on to check their in-boxes several times a day and a growing number of firms have their networks configured to automatically deliver email directly to the user's desktop.

Sadly there are still plenty of people who regard email as something you only check on a Friday afternoon, if you have a slack period and then only after you have completed your time sheet and expenses claim forms for the week.

**LTi** recently had to fax one IT supplier (ironically a supplier of internet systems) to ask why they hadn't replied to an urgent email. The managing director said it was because the company "hadn't really got the email habit" but then added that there was a letter in the post! ☐

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### SKILLS SHORTAGE PUSHING UP IT JOB RATES ?

**There has been much publicity about the so-called IT skills crisis and the way factors such as Year 2000 projects are pushing up salary levels. But how does this affect the every day law firm? Longbridge recruitment consultant Craig Coverman reports...**

Looking at both training and help desk/support staff (what might be called traditional skill areas), Longbridge is seeing extremely strong demand, split mostly into two camps, depending on whether the firm is a Microsoft or WordPerfect/Novell site.

A typical requirement might be for either a WordPerfect or a Word trainer and a Novell GroupWise or a Windows NT Exchange support individual. Some firms want to have their cake and eat it and are asking for a Novell person who also has experience of NT, or a WordPerfect trainer with MS Word, as the practice migrates to the newer platform.

In terms of prices, the market has definitely moved up a pace. Trainers are now asking for £25,000 to £30,000 in London, as opposed to £20,000 to £25,000 a year ago. Support staff are asking for similar figures, with even young graduates able to command £17,000 to £20,000 for their first job.

The major new trend Longbridge has seen over the last year is the move by firms to request *customer focused* candidates - individuals who possess not only technical skills, but also the ability to provide a quality service to users. This is a welcome move by firms and can only improve the perception of IT among fee earners and partners.

Another shift over the last half decade has been the globalisation of law firms, with a corresponding increase in complexity of the networks needed to support an international firm. Longbridge has been providing a regular supply of communications analysts to its clients ➔

➔ usually with experience of hubs, bridges, (Cisco) routers and frame relay. Expect to pay somewhere between £27,000 to £33,000 for these individuals.

The rapid take-up by firms of internet and intranet technologies has also created a demand for candidates with HTML, web design or at the very least, experience of hypertext links. These candidates are less expensive than their comms counterparts and average salaries are between £18,000 to £26,000.

Today not many firms develop their own software but those that do, such as Freshfields and Slaughter & May, seem to be concentrating on developing with Active-X in mind.

For example, Slaughters is developing new systems on a 3-tier architecture utilising COM (Component Object Model) which Slaughter & May development manager David Allan says is "the future of 32-bit Windows development". So, a regular requirement these days is for Visual Basic programmers, often combining Visual C++ skills, to join the team. Prices here are difficult to determine but again, expect to pay £25,000 upwards for a good quality coder.

Job rates are on the increase, good quality candidates are few and far between and there is strong competition. In the City of London, investment banks are still paying top dollars to get the best candidates on board, often to the detriment of law firms who find it difficult to compete on terms. One firm recently lost three key people in as many days to the lures of a fatter pay packet, with one individual effectively earning a 75% pay rise overnight.

Perhaps the real challenge for lawyers therefore is to find the right kind of people who will enjoy the culture of working in the legal profession and not be tempted away as soon as some bank opens its wallet. As comms analysts can make £40 to £50 per hour on contract, it takes a special type of person to be happy with £27,000 in a law firm when they could earn over £75,000 elsewhere. ☐

### Phase one complete at Eversheds

**Eversheds has completed the first phase of its implementation of a new £7 million practice management system in its London, Brussels and Jersey offices.**

**Described as "the biggest Elite installation in the world" the hardware side of the five year project is being handled by Planet Solutions (☎ 0113 234 5111), the systems integrator division of Planet Online.**

**For the first phase Planet supplied two Digital Alpha Server systems. One will be used for development projects while the second, which has 1.5Gb of RAM, will run the production version of Elite.**

**Eversheds chose the Alpha platform for its scalability and ability to migrate, when required at a later date, from Unix to NT without hardware changes.**

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### Seen around the Web...

☞ **FT Law & Tax has joined the growing number of legal publishers with a supporting web site offering product news and legal updates. It can be found at <http://www.ftlawandtax.com>**

☞ **Specialist speech recognition and document management systems supplier Perfect Docs now has a web site at <http://www.sosi.net/perfectdocs/>**

☞ **The anti piracy organisation, the Federation Against Software Theft (FAST), has opened a new web site at <http://www.fast.org.uk> to assist computer users who are concerned they are the victims of software counterfeiters.**

☞ **The Estates Gazette subscription-based next day property cases law reporting service can be found at <http://www.propertylaw.co.uk>**

### LAW PUBLISHERS HEADING FOR SHAKEOUT ?

**The news that later this week leading UK legal publisher Butterworths is to launch a new web-based "next day" law reporting service has prompted fears that both conventional and electronic publishers could soon be heading for a major shakeout.**

Called the *All England Reporter*, the new service will provide next day digests and unapproved judgments that can be accessed via the Butterworths web site (<http://www.butterworths.co.uk>) some eight to twelve weeks before they become available through official sources.

At the time of going to press the pricing details for the new service are not yet available but whatever the price, Butterworths' entry into the increasingly crowded current awareness field is raising doubts as to how long the market can continue to support so many players.

In the face of competition from Sweet & Maxwell/LIR and Lawtel, Link has already dropped its case reports but with Context/Smith Bernal and now Butterworths entering the field, **LTi** sources suggest another independent, New Law Online, may also find it increasingly difficult to remain competitive.

One senior publisher told **LTi** that she thought John Pritchard of Link and Kenneth Bagnall of New Law had done an excellent job opening up the market by getting law firms to install modems and appreciate the value of next day law reporting "but now it was time for the big boys to take over".

☞ **Comment...** Uncertainty now also surrounds the longer term future of the legal division of FT Law & Tax following parent group Pearson's announcement that it intended to sell a significant number of non-core businesses and concentrate of information, media and entertainment services. In recent months Pearson has spent £233 million buying ➔

➔ the company that owns the rights to the *Baywatch* and *Blind Date* television programmes while at the same time cutting back on "professional" publishing activities. This has led to speculation that Pearson will shortly split the FT Law & Tax division, with the financial titles being merged with its FT Business Publications division, while the legal arm - the old Longmans - is put up for sale. ☐

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### Irish news...

#### LAWLINK IN MAID TIE-UP

LawLink, the Irish online service which is jointly owned by the IFG Group and the Law Society of Ireland, has signed a deal with the online information services provider MAID that will give subscribers access to a wide range of MAID's business news and company intelligence services.

☞ **Comment...** It has been a busy month for MAID. Along with the LawLink deal, the company has acquired the Muscat retrieval software company (see **LTi 45 for first report**); made a successful £285 million takeover bid for the giant US-based Knight-Ridder information services supplier (the group will be renamed the Dialog Corporation after Knight-Ridder's leading database product); and had its consumer oriented *Home Business Centre* bundled in as one of the "active channel" services bundled in with Microsoft's new Internet Explorer 4.0 browser software in the UK.

LawLink, which offers a Link-style secure email service to Irish solicitors, says a similar UK project is now in a research phase, with a view to being launched in the spring/summer of 1998. Although LawLink is hinting the UK service will directly compete with Link, the figures currently being quoted suggest LawLink's prices will be significantly higher than those charged by Link.

For more details check MAID on <http://www.maid.com> or call Andrew Frazer of LawLink on ☎ +(353) 1 6766 222 or visit <http://www.lawlink.ie> ☐

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### COLLEGE OF LAW TO ROLL OUT INTRANETWARE

The College of Law, which is now the largest provider of legal education services in Europe, is rolling out Novell Directory Services (NDS), IntranetWare and ManageWise as part of a major project to transform the local area networks at each site into a college-wide network for staff and students. The new network will initially serve 450 staff at the College's sites at Guildford, Chester, York and the two London locations of Store Street and Breems Buildings.

The College's IT manager Nick Galt said future plans included: expanding the network to encompass students across all five sites; creating external links both as a way of course delivery to students and supplying information to law firms and professional bodies; and implementing a virtual private network (VPN) supporting voice, data and video.

The College is also considering the introduction of internet access and Novell GroupWise for all students and staff. More information about the College and the courses can be found on its own web site at <http://www.lawcol.org.uk> □

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### MANAGING YOUR MESSAGES

As part of the relaunch of its *Director's Pocket Book* series, the Institute of Directors has teamed up with comms specialist Kommunicate to publish a new guide to the topic of "unified messaging".

Called *Managing Your Messages Effectively*, the 40-page guide covers a range of topics including desktop faxing, voice mail and computer telephony integration (CTI). The guide is available free of charge to IoD members, additional copies are available from the IoD bookshop (☎ 0171 451 6060) price £8.00 inc p&p.

In a related development, as part of the company's strategy to concentrate on its core communications software business, Kommunicate (☎ 01252 815514) has now sold its old Fontware computerised type operation. □

### LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

**October 17 - Mobile Computing for Lawyers, London.** One day conference organised by Society for Computers & Law looking at technical and practical issues associated with mobile computing, including "hot desking" and its use by High Court judges. Takes place at No.1 Great George Street, London. Starts 9.30am. Cost: from £195 (+VAT) and qualifies for 5+ CPD hours. Call SCL on ☎ 0117 923 7393 for details.

**October 21 & 22 - Northern Legal Office Exhibition, Manchester.** New two day IT exhibition organised by the same people who run the annual event at the Barbican. Among the exhibitors are several major IT systems suppliers who were not at the Barbican, including MSS Access, Norwel and Quill. Takes place in the Windsor Hall at the GMEX Centre in Manchester. Admission free. Opening times: 9.30am to 7.30pm (Tuesday), 9.30am to 5.00pm (Wednesday). Call Truemist on ☎ 0181 742 3399 for details.

**October 29 - Interactive Internet Sites for Lawyers, Birmingham.** Two half-day seminars hosted by Michael Kaye of Kaye Tesler looking at ways law firm web sites can generate new business. Commences at 10.00am and 2.00pm. Cost £40 (+VAT) and the event qualifies for 3 CPD hours. Further seminars to be held in Leeds (12 November) and Bristol (27 November). Call NKT Computer Consultants on ☎ 0181 802 6817 for details.

**November 6 & 7 - Norwel 25th Anniversary Interactive Roadshow, London.** As part of a marketing drive to promote new products, as well as a new corporate identity to celebrate 25 years in the legal IT sector, Norwel is planning a series of interactive roadshows. The first of these takes place at the Institute of Directors. Admission is by invitation only, for details contact Alison Bagnall on ☎ 0181 742 3399. ➔

➔ *Legal IT Diary Dates continued...*

**November 26 - LITigate '97, London.** Second annual one day conference and mini exhibition looking at case management technologies and litigation strategy. This year's event, which is once again sponsored by **Legal Technology Insider**, will include speakers from Davies Arnold Cooper and Dibb Lupton Alsop, as well as sessions looking at web enabled case management and intranets. Takes place at Café Royal, Regent Street, commences 9.00am. Cost £380 (+VAT). Call Forum Conferences on ☎ 0181 445 8060 for details.

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Next issue...  
Issue 49 of the Insider will be published on Monday 27th October.

### SUBJECTS IN THIS ISSUE

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