

**John V C Butcher**  
**18 Bramble Rise**  
**Cobham, Surrey KT11 2HP**

tel. 01932 867511 and 07899 891685  
e-mail: [jvcbutcher@btinternet.com](mailto:jvcbutcher@btinternet.com)

**Peter J Fisher MBE**  
**183 Central Park Road**  
**London E6 3AE**

tel. 020 8472 7873 and 07504 306379  
e-mail: [peterfisher183@virginmedia.com](mailto:peterfisher183@virginmedia.com)

*Please reply to the above address*

Mr [REDACTED]  
Head of the Crown Office and Deputy Clerk to the Crown  
Ministry of Justice  
Crown Office  
House of Lords  
London SW1A 0PW

10 July 2014

### **JUDGES' SERVICES**

Thank you for your letter dated 13 June 2014. We are grateful for the disclosure of the Order of Service for the October 2013 Judges' Service.

We note your suggestion to us to address future Freedom of Information requests to the Data Access and Compliance Unit at the Ministry of Justice, with which we shall of course comply, whilst also as a courtesy copying such requests to you – beginning with the enclosed copy of our letter of yesterday to that unit.

Thank you for advising us of the link to the Ministry's disclosure log for Freedom of Information requests. We have accessed and examined the log again and we notice that there is still no disclosure there of the request that we made for lists of judges who had accepted invitations to the Judges' Services in 2011, 2012 and 2013, lists which were disclosed to us on 4 December 2013. We have not been informed why that information has not been included in the log, even though we have asked. Since the information has been published elsewhere, as we informed you, we cannot see what justification there can be for not showing that disclosure in that log. This strange omission from the log is itself beginning to look remarkable.

If any such service takes place this year, the Ministry has the option of disclosing the list of those accepting invitations to it (or, better still, those attending) and the Order of Service. Given its importance and the controversy surrounding it, we suggest that credit would accrue to the Ministry if it is seen to disclose that information on its own initiative, rather than waiting for it to be extracted in response to a Freedom of Information request. The information will certainly be published in either event, and the options are for the Ministry to gain credit for its transparency, or the opposite. We invite you to consider voluntary publication as the most appropriate option.

For your information, we have:

- (a) alerted the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey to the controversial nature of these services, to their adverse effects on the impartiality of judges attending them and, if they

continue for the moment, to the desirability of some members of the public and the media being allowed to be present,

- (b) briefed the shadow Justice Secretary about these issues, in case the matter falls to him to deal with at some future date, and
- (c) drawn to the attention of each of Her Majesty's most senior judges the implications for judicial impartiality of their attendance at any Judges' Service(s).

We continue to be concerned that the attendance of judges at these services needlessly compromises their independence on religious issues, thus undermining public respect for the judiciary, and so we shall be pursuing the matter until the services end permanently. We remain willing to meet with you or any of the Justice Secretary's colleagues or officials to discuss the future conduct of this matter, if that would help.

**John V C Butcher**

**Peter J Fisher**