



Good Law News

“Our aim for good law is that users of legislation should experience law that is necessary, effective, clear, coherent and accessible. It’s about what we put into legislation, how we prepare it, and how we arrange and present it.

I am appealing to anyone involved in developing policy ideas, or in writing or publishing the legislation that may emerge to get involved”.

Richard Heaton CB, First Parliamentary Counsel and Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office



Welcome to the first issue of Good Law News



Panel (from L to R): **Martin Jones**, Director, Law for Life; **Jill Rutter**, Programme Director, Institute for Government; **John Sheridan**, Head of Legislation Services at the National Archives; and **Richard Heaton CB**, First Parliamentary Counsel and Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office.

The **Rt. Hon Andrew Lansley CBE MP**, Leader of the House of Commons, also joined the debate and is backing this initiative.

Good law Launch Event

The good law initiative was launched at the Institute for Government on 16 April. To take a look go to www.gov.uk/good-law

Our vision is “To produce and promote good law. Good Law is law that is necessary, clear, coherent, effective and accessible.”

Good Law is an appeal to everyone interested in the making and publishing of law to come together with a shared objective of making legislation work well for the users of today and tomorrow. This is ambitious, but there are two reasons for optimism -

- the power of web publishing, data management and analytical software means that there will be new and better ways of presenting and arranging law. Legislation is, among other things, a complex dataset, so let’s allow the data to be liberated, using what’s been learnt elsewhere; and
- we’ve had a tremendous response from people and organisations who share this goal but have not come together before. The law’s complexity is nobody’s fault in particular. But drafters, digital publishers, the policy profession, the Law Commission, parliamentary authorities, the legal profession, and the users of law can all contribute to easier, less obscure legislation.

The launch event triggered a **debate on Twitter**, here is a selection of views:

“Perfect example of democratic engagement this evening at #goodlaw with so many diverse views around legislation but shared interests” @ctullo

“Don't let anyone tell you the law doesn't belong to you - Martin Jones #lawforlife #goodlaw” @ifgevents

“RT @ifgevents: Andrew Lansley echoes @RHCabinetOffice point on tendency for law to cover every eventuality and thus become complex #goodlaw” @jillongovt

“...the #GoodLaw initiative is not just for lawyers but for everyone. Citizens, policy wonks, police, protestors, teachers & more” @Puffles 2010

“People from all walks of life lose their nerve when dealing with legal issues. Many professionals ill-equipped to helping users. #goodlaw” @lawbore

OPC report on causes of complex legislation

OPC’s **report on the causes of complexity in legislation**, published to coincide with the launch, suggests that there is no single cause of complexity, but many. That is perhaps not surprising. See the link below to access the report.

Good Law Champions

OPC is creating a network of good law champions across Whitehall to share our vision and work with us to take this initiative forward within their own departments. A list of these champions will be available on the good law website shortly.

Good Law Resources

Publications

The latest documents published:

OPC report on causes of complex legislation

www.gov.uk/government/publications/when-laws-become-too-complex

OPC Office pamphlets

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-office-of-the-parliamentary-counsel-guidance

Events

TEDx Houses Of Parliament talk on representation and democracy

with Richard Heaton and a number of others speaking, 14 June 2013.

www.tedxhousesofparliament.com

Further information

Website www.gov.uk/good-law

Twitter #goodlaw

Guardian Public Leaders chat on 16 April:

www.guardian.co.uk/public-leaders-network/2013/apr/11/good-law-legislation-live-chat

Good Law partnership

“Adopting a good law approach to our legislation ensures it is the best quality that it can be; ensuring the best output from policy inception through to operational delivery. I think a particular benefit is that the law will be as tailored as possible to the needs of the end-users – striking the best balance possible where there is variance between the needs of different classes of user (e.g. Government, Parliament, the public).”

Christopher Mahood, Legislation and European Coordination team member and Good Law champion at HMRC.

“Twenty years ago, legislation was drafted for and used by lawyers. Today, the statute book is accessed and read by millions of people, at legislation.gov.uk - most of whom are not legally trained or qualified. Good law is a golden opportunity to substantially improve access to legislation for all. We are really excited to be involved.”

John Sheridan, Head of Legislation Services, the National Archives.