



AHUA Autumn Conference 2018
Radcliffe Conference Centre, University of Warwick
Friday 14th September 2018

Speaker Biographies



Lord Kerslake, Chair of the Commission, Former Head of the Civil Service

Lord Kerslake is the Chair of Sheffield Hallam University, Chair of Peabody, Chair of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), Chair of London Collective Investment Vehicle, and is President of the Local Government Association.

A former Head of the Civil Service, Bob led the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) from November 2010, stepping down in February 2015. Prior to his DCLG role, he was the first Chief Executive of the Homes and Communities Agency.

Before joining the Civil Service, Bob received a knighthood for his services to local government, spending eight years serving the London Borough of Hounslow and then a further 11 years leading Sheffield Council. In early 2015, he was made a life peer, taking the title Baron Kerslake, of Endcliffe in the City of Sheffield.



Chenine Bhatena, Creative Director, Coventry City of Culture Trust

Chenine Bhatena has overall responsibility for Coventry's UK City of Culture programming, co-curation, community engagement, capacity building and development of national and regional partnerships.

Chenine comes to the Trust from the Greater London Authority where she led the Mayor's Cultural Placemaking Team and was Programme Director for the Mayor's London Borough of Culture award. Previous experience also includes Creative Programmer for the London 2012 Olympics/Paralympics and Arts Council England (London and national offices). Over the last five years she has made the case for greater investment in culture through major high street, housing and transport development schemes, leading a range of high profile arts programmes for the Mayor including Lumiere London and the Illuminated River. Chenine is a Board Director for IF: Milton Keynes.



Jeannette Strachan, University Registrar and Secretary, University of Hull

Jeannette Strachan was appointed as the University Registrar and Secretary at the University of Hull in April 2013.

She is a Hull alumna and has a BSc in Economics from the University. She also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration from the University of London and a Masters in Business Administration from City University.

Whilst at the University of Hull, Jeannette was a member of the University Air Squadron, and after graduation served as an officer in the RAF. She has worked in education for over 25 years, including positions at City University London, UCL and St George's, University of London. In 2010, Jeannette was appointed Academic Registrar/ Director of Student and Academic Services at Newcastle University and returned to the University of Hull in 2013 as the Registrar and Secretary. Jeannette's portfolio includes Governance and Compliance, Legal Services, Health and Safety and Student Services (including Careers and Employability, Registry Services, Student Wellbeing and the Student Hub). Jeannette is a Director of Southern Universities Management Services, Regional Convenor for the AHUA Northern Group, Trustee of the University of Hull Pension and Assurance Scheme and a Fellow of the Association of University Administrators.



Professor Kelly Coate, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Education and Students, University of Sussex

Kelly Coate joined Sussex from King's College London, where she was Vice Dean (Education) at the Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy from September 2017. She was also a Reader in Higher Education, School of Education, Communication and Society. Prior to this Kelly was Director of the King's Learning Institute and Senior Lecturer in Higher Education at the university from 2013 - 2017.

Prior to Kings, Kelly was Lecturer in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education at National University of Ireland, Galway from 2007 – 2013, where she also spent two years as Vice Dean (Graduate Studies). She joined NUI Galway from the UCL Institute of Education where she held research and teaching roles in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

In addition to holding positions in leading UK institutions, Kelly's academic careers include serving on the Editorial Boards of Teaching in Higher Education, Higher Education Research and Development, and the Journal of Education Policy. She is currently a member of the



Publications Sub-Committee of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), and formerly founding convener of the SRHE Network 'The Digital University'.

Her most recent research project was on Senior Professional Leaders in HE. The report can be found here: http://www.srhe.ac.uk/downloads/reports-2016/Report_SRHE_CoateKandikoHowson2018.pdf



Claire Clarke, Managing Partner, Mills & Reeve LLP

In addition to her role as managing partner, Claire is a corporate specialist whose work involves helping listed and private companies as well as those who fund them on a wide range of corporate matters. This includes sales and acquisitions, takeovers, raising finance, restructuring and joint ventures. She also specialises in advising universities and other education bodies with their corporate needs including structuring spin outs, mergers and national and international collaborations.

As part of Mills & Reeve's 2020 strategy the firm is building on their collaborative culture, something that runs throughout the whole firm, from support staff to partners. They understand that clients value the expertise offered, not just in terms of legal support but also pragmatic, commercial, solution focussed, business advice.

Leading legal directory Chambers UK described Claire as: "Determined, extremely quick and exceptionally hard-working". She was also praised for her advice to higher education clients on corporate matters, including M&A and spin-offs.



Gary Attle, Head of Education & Governance, Mills & Reeve LLP

Gary leads the education sector practice at Mills & Reeve. In addition to his management responsibilities, he supports higher education and research bodies on a wide range of public law, private law and charity law matters, including: governance and constitutional issues; freedom of information, data protection and privacy law; freedom of speech and defamation; legislation affecting universities and colleges; student matters including complaints, appeals, disciplinary and fitness to practice procedures; equality, diversity and human rights issues; and civil claims and judicial review.

During the course of his career, he has been a Board member of the Higher Education Academy, contributed to various conferences, books, journals and consultations and advised in test cases on the law as it relates to higher education.



Leading legal directory Chambers UK described him as “dynamic, knowledgeable and experienced”, peers appreciate ‘a real quality lawyer; he is level-headed and doesn’t make things unnecessarily complex”.



**Alun Thomas, Employment Lawyer, Mediator,
Anderson Strathern**

Alun has been a Partner at Anderson Strathern since 1990. He is accredited as a specialist in Employment Law by the Law Society of Scotland (1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016); registered as a Mediator by CEDR and also a Scottish Mediation Registered Mediator.

Alun is Head of Anderson Strathern’s top rated Education Group and leads their Employment and Pensions Team. He is currently Vice Chair at Scottish Mediation.

Alun acts as Lead Partner for a number of Higher Education and Public Sector clients where teams of specialist lawyers are required to deliver packages of legal services to clients with a wide range of requirements. He is on the board of the Bridges Project (working with homeless young people in East Lothian) and New Media Scotland.

He is particularly alert to the needs of public sector clients to manage a business in the context of public scrutiny whilst balancing reputational risk all against a background of restricted public expenditure.



Declan Magee, Partner, Carson McDowell LLP

Declan heads the Education Team in Carson McDowell LLP. The firm has a long standing relationship working in the education sector, having acted for our region’s universities, further education colleges, schools and supporting organisations. Currently he is the client relationship manager for the firm’s position as legal advisor to the University of Ulster.

Regularly Declan works with lawyers in the firm across a wide range of disciplines, including employment, property and corporate support to provide a cross-departmental education team. As the largest law firm in their jurisdiction they have the breadth of services required to assist what is a very vibrant and diverse client base in the exciting and ever changing education sector.

Chambers UK has described Declan as “a very highly respected and professional professional who understands clients well and heads up an effective team”.



Viki Cooke, Vice-Chair of Council at the University of Warwick and Founding Director of Britain Thinks

BritainThinks was launched in July 2010, a consultancy that aims to put the public - as a citizen, consumer or colleague - at the heart of decision making.

Prior to setting up BritainThinks, Viki was Joint Chair of the Research and Engagement Division of Chime Communications. This incorporated several businesses that Viki set up over the last 20 years including Opinion Leader Research, The Smart Company, Brand Democracy and Caucus.

Viki began her career in advertising before founding Opinion Leader Research in 1992. Opinion Leader grew to be one of the most highly respected market research agencies in the UK winning numerous awards and an enviable reputation for innovation.

Viki has been a pioneer in the use of deliberative research methods and has been closely involved in designing and delivering programmes that engage citizens in an informed dialogue on a wide range of complex policy issues including reform of the NHS, future funding of the pensions system, climate change and, most recently, dealing with the deficit. Viki is a frequent media commentator, particularly on news and current affairs programmes, a regular conference speaker and writer. She is a Chair of Hubbub Foundation a behaviour change sustainability charity and a Trustee of the Climate Group.

Viki began her first term of office as a lay member of the University Council in 2008 and became Vice-Chair of Council in 2013. She also chairs the Audit and Risk Committee and serves on the Honorary Degrees Committee and the Nominations Committee and is Pro-Chancellor of the University.



Ben Kernighan, Deputy Chief Executive, Leap Confronting Conflict

Ben is Deputy Chief Executive of Leap Confronting Conflict, a charity that runs programmes to help young people manage conflict better, and provides conflict management training to senior executives in the private, public and voluntary sector.

Before that he was fleetingly the CEO of NUS where one of his few fond memories was giving a speech at the AHUA conference and meeting all the lovely University Registrars. He still has the decanter to show for it.



Ben spent 15 years at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations including leading its public policy work. This involved leading programmes to maintain high levels of trust and confidence in charities and protecting charities from reputational attack.

Ben started his working life in the HIV and AIDS sector and has been a trustee of Business in the Community, supporting businesses to make a bigger positive influence in society.



Louise Neilan, Head of Communications, Southwark Council

Louise Neilan is currently Head of Communications for Southwark Council in London. Louise joined Southwark in 2009 as Media Manager from the Audit Commission where she worked for 7 years in a range of strategic communications and media relations roles. Prior to that Louise worked for two other London boroughs.

Marc Reeves, Editor of the Birmingham Mail and Birmingham Post, and West Midlands editor-in-chief for Reach plc

Marc has worked across the regional media in a number of senior editorial and management roles for more than 30 years, since starting as a local reporter in Birmingham, his home town.

In a brief break from the industry he indulged his interest in politics and communications by launching a regional public affairs agency, and also helped launch a regional business news website.

For the past five years, he has been leading the transformation of his titles into fully digital news platforms, and BirminghamLive, with more than 500,000 readers every day, is one of the largest regional news brands in the UK.