

## Trailblazing again

### The UK will strengthen its position as a global leader in legal services innovation.

With London's commercial courts emerging as best-in-class performers in the adoption of virtual hearings and online case management during the coronavirus pandemic, the UK is poised to strengthen its position as the world's leader in legal services innovation. This will be backed by a progressively minded judiciary, a favourable regulatory climate and an expanding group of New Law suppliers. With London already established as a key arena for litigation funders and law tech, the UK capital is poised to rekindle the creative spark that marked its pioneering role in the 1990s and early 2000s. Litigators, moreover, are predicting that England's civil courts, cheered on by a reformist Master of the Rolls in Sir Geoffrey Vos, will encourage fresh reforms.

Legal technology consultant and author Richard Susskind sees the pandemic as an opportunity London should grab. "Covid has opened minds. What we are seeing now is planning in three different phases," he says. "Policymakers and judges are asking, 'How do we get through the crisis?' Secondly, they are wondering, 'How do we industrialise what's gone well through the Covid period and keep doing it?' Thirdly, the big transformation project involves asking fundamental questions about how we should resolve disputes."

Also citing the role of a reform-minded Bench is Essex Court Chambers' Joe Smouha QC. "One of the things which has kept competition healthy is that innovation in management of cases has tended to be driven from the London Commercial Courts. On the disclosure side, we're going to see this driven very much by the courts."

Many hope London's courts and arbitration community will further build on expanded use of remote hearings to deploy more hybrid proceedings to boost efficiency. London will also come under mounting pressure to innovate to contain spiralling dispute resolution costs.

This is an excerpt from an HFW report on the future of dispute resolution. To read the rest of the report, which includes a series of 30 interviews with senior in-house counsel and other leading figures from across the global disputes industry, as well as insights from our expert litigators, visit: [www.hfw.com/litigation](http://www.hfw.com/litigation)

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