

# TIMES ONLINE

## In the City: things are looking up for property teams

Edward Fennell

### Ray of sunshine

Quick off the mark — or jumping the gun? That was my question when I saw that James Furber, senior partner at Farrer & Co, was talking about being in the “post-recession era”. Not being an economist I have no idea whether the growth in the UK economy of 0.1% in the last quarter amounts to a decisive improvement. Nonetheless it’s good to see that Farrer’s commercial property team is sufficiently encouraged by the figures to recruit Richard Peskin, formerly of Great Portland Estates, as a consultant.

Mind you, this is part of a pattern. Almost the only place you can glimpse a champagne flute these days seems to be as West End firms — such as Davenport Lyons — celebrate the return of the good times to the retail commercial property business. And, what’s more, they are recruiting too. At a time when some Magic Circle firms are slashing the number of newly qualified solicitors they retain, it’s encouraging to see a ray of sunshine — even if it is glinting off a tiny sliver of hope.

### Digital direction

A lethargic reluctance to venture into the unknown protects me from mishap on the byways of the internet. Not so the young, whose digital facility combined with personal immaturity makes them a danger to themselves.

So Speechly Bircham was bang on the money when it supported the launch of “The i in online” on Data Protection Day last week.

The firm had led a consortium, including Bristows, Field Fisher Waterhouse, Dechert and Pinsent Masons, to create the project to educate children and teenagers (as well as their teachers and parents) on how to be more canny on the internet, especially when using social networking sites.

To become fully fledged “digital citizens” (as Speechly calls them) children need to be more aware of the dangerous personalities lying in wait in cyberspace — and I guess it’s not just ambulance-chasing no-win, no-fee lawyers they have in mind.

### Clean lines

It’s good to see that Collyer Bristow is resuming the excellent art shows in the gallery of its ground-floor reception in Bedford Row. I don’t get to these as often as I would like but the new show, “Line Journeys”, which is launched, next Wednesday, appears to include some delicate works of refreshing innocence. It’s a good deed in a naughty world.

### Channel hopping

The Pas de Calais is apparently positioning itself as part of southern England for the purposes of the Olympics. Meanwhile, is London to become a suburb of Paris Nord? Gide Loyrette Nouel’s senior partner, Pierre Raoul-Duval, and the firm’s managing partner, Christophe Eck, were in Londres last week to rally the troops and talk about the firm’s “international expansion plans”. Get ready to repel boarders.

