

The London Solicitors Litigation Association becomes a major supporter of the Black Talent Charter

10 February 2023: The London Solicitors Litigation Association (LSLA) is proud to announce it has become a major supporter of the Black Talent Charter (BTC).

The LSLA, which represents the interests of commercial and civil litigators in London, hopes to use its influence as a leading member organisation to encourage greater diversity and inclusion across the legal sector, particularly in the field of litigation.

The BTC was launched in October 2020 by Harry Matovu KC and Michael Eboda, the founder and CEO of Powerful Media, and it is led by Harry Matovu (Chair) and Laura Durrant (CEO), senior Black professionals with first-hand experience of the issues in question and many years' experience of working in the organisations it supports. The not-for-profit organisation aims to change the landscape for the recruitment and promotion of Black talent in the legal and financial sectors by working collaboratively with leading firms and institutions across the financial and professional sectors to accelerate systemic change. This is with the ultimate aim of making the business community reflect the UK population in the representation of Black talent within the next 10 years, instead of the 30 years that it would otherwise take (according to work commissioned by the BTC from Bain & Company).

The LSLA joins the Corporation of London, Business London, Magic Circle and other top law firms, accountancy firms, banks and financial institutions, as well as barristers' Chambers and other legal professional bodies such as The Bar Council, The Commercial Bar Association (Combar) and The London Common Law and Commercial Bar Association (LCLCBA) in support of the Charter.

As part of its role for the BTC, the LSLA will advocate the mission of the Charter within its organisation and encourage its member firms to join as signatories. This work comes as part of efforts on behalf of the LSLA to highlight the need for diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, particularly in the litigation sector.

Commenting, BTC Chair Harry Matovu KC said: *"We are delighted that the LSLA has decided to be a major supporter and advocate of the Charter. Our shared mission is to accelerate the creation of genuine equality of opportunity for talented Black professionals, who are disproportionately overlooked and underserved in the financial and professional sectors. This cannot be achieved by individual firms and organisations acting independently, but it can be achieved by a broad coalition of firms and organisations working in collaboration.*

"The Charter's mission and programmes have been developed by senior Black professionals with first-hand experience of the issues in question. They have attracted powerful support from the City and the legal sector, with signatories to date including Magic Circle and top City law firms, five of the 'Big Six' accountancy giants, major UK retail banks and the International Chamber of Commerce (UK); and supporters including the City of London Corporation, regulatory and professional bodies, professional and trade associations and leading barristers' Chambers. The signatory base is growing as more firms learn about the project, and the LSLA and its member firms will be fundamental to this effort.

"This is a unique opportunity, and with the support of the LSLA and others, we can collectively create an environment in which talented Black professionals can finally have confidence to make careers in these sectors, to aspire to lead and to be represented at the highest levels of top organisations, and to make a full contribution to their firms and to the wider economy. We look forward to working with the LSLA to drive this forward."

Nicholas Heaton, President of the LSLA said: *"The LSLA is delighted to be lending its support to the mission of the Charter. As an organisation representing litigators practicing in London, working for diversity in the litigation field is an important issue for the LSLA and its members.*

Harry Matovu KC of the Charter spoke powerfully at our recent annual dinner highlighting the urgent need for action to promote Black talent. This issue needs to be addressed and the LSLA wishes to promote that objective by lending its voice to the cause and by encouraging its members to identify the steps they can take, and to consider signing up to the BTC themselves."

ENDS

Notes for Editors

BTC: The Black Talent Charter is a not-for-profit, cross-organisational, cross-sectoral, collaborative initiative which supports and commits firms to accelerating improvement in the recruitment, retention and progression of Black talent: <https://blacktalentcharter.com/>

Harry Matovu KC, the Chair of the BTC, is a barrister specialising in commercial litigation and arbitration. He practises from Brick Court Chambers, one of the premier commercial sets in the country. He was named in The Lawyer 'Hot 100' List for 2021 and nominated as Silk (KC) of the Year for International Arbitration in The Legal 500 Awards 2020 and 2022. He was recognised in the Powerlist 2022 for the second year in succession as one of the most influential Black professionals in the UK.

Laura Durrant, CEO of the BTC, is a partner in Equitura, a business consultancy. Prior to founding Equitura and becoming CEO of the BTC, she was a partner in a global law firm and Head of Litigation, Regulatory and Investigations at the Royal Bank of Scotland from 2010 to 2018.

LSLA: The London Solicitors Litigation Association represents the interests of a wide range of commercial and civil litigators in London. It has over 3,700 members, ranging from sole practitioners to large international firms. It provides a strong and effective voice for litigators in law-defining consultations and debate: <http://www.lsla.co.uk/>