Unjustified police fears of Human Rights Act due to ‘lack of training’

Speech by leading barrister at Sweet & Maxwell/JUSTICE conference

If the police are being deterred from using their full powers because of unfounded fears that their actions may be deemed unlawful under the Human Rights Act (HRA), the solution lies in training, leading barrister Richard Perks will say at the Sweet & Maxwell/JUSTICE Policing & Human Rights conference (today, May 24th 2007).

According to Richard Perks, high profile cases in the early days of HRA litigation which went against Government Departments such as the Home Office have created an unjustified fear amongst police officers that the courts are unfairly sympathetic to all claims based on HRA arguments.

Richard Perks says that the myths that have grown up around the Human Rights Act are resulting in the police being more reluctant to fully exercise their powers in three key areas:

- Disclosure of information between police forces and Government agencies.
- Covert surveillance of suspects, such as filming.
- Stop and search.

Speaking at the conference hosted by Sweet & Maxwell, a Thomson business (NYSE: TOC: TSX: TOC), and JUSTICE, a leading human rights charity, Richard Perks says:

“The Human Rights Act does not present a threat to effective policing, but the myths which have grown up around its application by the courts do present a threat. The response of the police can be criticised as no more than a lack of training. But if it exists, the problem must be addressed.”

Roger Smith, Director of JUSTICE, agrees, saying:

“Education, education, education is the issue here. There is nothing in the Human Rights Act to prevent the police carrying out the role we all need them to play. We need to dispel the urban myths and iron out any technical misunderstandings. I hope that today’s conference will contribute to that process.”

Baroness Ashton, minister for human rights at the newly-created Ministry of Justice, will tell delegates:

“quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice … quote from Ministry of Justice …”

ENDS
Notes to Editors:

Sweet & Maxwell ([www.sweetandmaxwell.thomson.com](http://www.sweetandmaxwell.thomson.com)) is a leading provider of information and solutions to the legal and professional markets in the UK and Ireland. With over 200 years of history and heritage in legal publishing, Sweet & Maxwell offers detailed and specialist knowledge, understanding, interpretation and commentary across a wide range of subjects in a variety of formats to meet customers' needs - books, journals, periodicals, looseleafs, CD-ROMs and online services.

The Thomson Corporation ([www.thomson.com](http://www.thomson.com)) is a global leader in providing essential electronic workflow solutions to business and professional customers. With operational headquarters in Stamford, Conn., Thomson provides value-added information, software tools and applications to more than 20 million users in the fields of law, tax, accounting, financial services, scientific research and healthcare. The Corporation's common shares are listed on the New York and Toronto stock exchanges (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC).

JUSTICE ([www.justice.org.uk](http://www.justice.org.uk)) is a leading UK law reform and human rights organisation. Chaired by Lord Goodhart QC, JUSTICE’s ruling Council comprises eminent lawyers, academics and representatives of all three major political parties. It is currently marking its 50th anniversary with a special programme of publications and events. It is an independent charity and relies on members and supporters for the funds to carry out its work.

Press enquiries:

Richard Perks  
5 Essex Court Chambers  
Tel: 020 7410 2000

Robbie Lonie or Paul Arvanitopoulos  
Mattison Public Relations  
Tel: 020 7645 3636

Peter Wylie  
Corporate Communications Manager  
Sweet & Maxwell  
Tel: 020 7393 7000

Roger Smith  
Director  
JUSTICE  
020 7762 6412 or 07785 781 030