



Press Notice

for immediate release

Former SE Chief Economist appointed associate with Core Solutions Group

The leading Scottish mediation group, Core Solutions, today announced that former Director of Strategy and Chief Economist at Scottish Enterprise, **Charlie Woods**, has agreed to become an associate in the growing business.

Woods trained as a mediator earlier this year and has been working with Core's founder and CEO, **John Sturrock QC**, to develop a strategy to take the idea of mediation and mediation techniques into the corporate and public sectors, with the target of helping business partners and contractors to collaborate more effectively in commercial arrangements, joint ventures and other enterprise partnerships.

John Sturrock said *"We are delighted to welcome Charlie. His experience of the enterprise sector in Scotland and elsewhere and his imaginative approach to collaboration is a natural development of the work Core has been doing in dispute resolution over the past five years in Scotland."*

Sturrock (who has just been named in Band 1 in Chambers UK Guide's Best of the UK Mediators, placing him among the top 10 UK practitioners), commented that the number of high level mediations in complex disputes in Scotland was now at an unprecedented level. *"We have passed our 200th mediation in recent weeks, the majority of which have occurred in the past couple of years. The range is diverse and very broad:*

from employment and workplace disputes, to intellectual property rights, to boardroom/shareholder/financing issues, to commercial and domestic property, commercial contracts, local authorities, fire services, not for profit charities, higher education colleges and universities, start up businesses, trusts and executries, building contracts, boundary disputes, sporting organisations and athletes, motorway construction, sale of goods, renewable energy, iconic buildings, professional, family and business partnerships, GP practices, farming, and professional negligence claims against solicitors, architects, engineers, accountants, auditors.

"The results are significant: many complex disputes resolved in a day or two, hundreds of thousands of pounds saved, energies channelled into productive time, renewed relationships. Recent research tells us that 20% of senior management time is spent on dispute management, 75% of cases involving

the CEO. For smaller and medium sized businesses, the engine room for wealth generation in Scotland, this is particularly wasteful.”

Charlie Woods said: “I have become convinced of the wider economic benefits to industry and commerce and to the Scottish economy in general of deploying the techniques that are used in mediation to help people to fashion better deals, overcome sticky negotiations and allocate resources more effectively. This might include, for example, university-industry collaboration, issues to do with planning and the environment, health sector projects and the funding of business start ups. The American Arbitration Association estimates that the price/earnings ratio of “dispute wise” companies is 70% higher than those businesses which are not. This is a great opportunity for Scotland.”

Mediation is well recognised to add value where a dispute is headed for court or other tribunal but Sturrock and Woods now want to see this added value extend to other areas of economic activity.

Sturrock again: “Finding mutually acceptable solutions that restore or preserve business relationships is essential where there are ongoing arrangements such as supply chains which would otherwise break down. Overall, better economic performance depends on better productivity. Better productivity can be achieved by improved approaches to problem-solving, at less cost and greater speed. Mediation encourages all of this.”

Woods’ role is to scope out the potential for these initiatives and to encourage a greater awareness of the value of bringing in independent facilitators to help partners and contractors to identify key issues, real interests, commercial options and reach decisions. *“My experience in finance and enterprise has given me a keen interest in the work of bodies such as the World Bank and the International Financial Corporation which promote mediation as a tool of economic development to help facilitate the development of a vibrant commercial sector. If we can build on Core’s good work in recent years and enhance Scotland’s reputation as a place where commercial differences can be resolved quickly, creatively and cheaply, this can only be good for the Scottish economy.”*

Note: last Thursday, the Scottish Parliament held an historic first debate on the topic of alternatives to court, including the use of mediation. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and other MSP’s recognised the economic benefits to Scotland of quicker, cheaper and more creative approaches to dispute resolution. The challenge now is for these ideas to be reflected in debates on the economy also.

Contact John Sturrock at 0131 221 2520 or john.sturrock@core-solutions.com