

## John Sturrock QC

YEAR OF CALL: 1986 YEAR OF SILK: 1999

*"A spellbinding mediator and great thinker...by far the best in the market"*

Who's Who Legal: Mediation 2018

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## Practice Overview

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John Sturrock QC is described as a *"thought leader"* and *"internationally recognised as a major player"* in mediation, with a reputation as a *"spellbinding mediator and great thinker"* and *"by far the best in the market"*. He is known for his *"knowledge and gravitas"*, *"keen intellect"*, *"preparation to get at core issues"* and *"massive wealth of experience in difficult negotiation situations"*. He is *"universally regarded as Scotland's finest mediator"* with a practice that extends throughout the UK, mainland Europe, Middle East and Africa.

**As an internationally recognised Mediator**, John has mediated many hundreds of disputes in a wide range of commercial, professional, public sector, political and other settings. Many of these matters have raised complex issues, some have involved multiple parties, most have resolved in a day. The value of claims has ranged from tens of thousands of pounds to hundreds of millions. He is recognised for his innovative approach to helping parties to resolve difficult matters.

**Since leaving active practice at the Scottish Bar in 2002, he has pursued a full-time career as a mediator, facilitator, conflict specialist and coach.** He has mediated in government, commerce, industry, the professions, sport, the public sector, senior management and other sensitive and complex matters and has facilitated many high-level dialogues. He has recently acted as mediator in complex private/public sector infrastructure/construction and engineering projects with claim values in the £hundreds of millions.

**John's style** is engaging and innovative with an emphasis on being rigorous on the issues when necessary, while recognising the need for respect and dignity amongst all concerned. His approach is to value parties' autonomy in making choices and to ensure that these choices are fully-informed and fully tested. **He is facilitative and thorough, working energetically alongside parties with a lightness of touch and focussed perseverance**

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. Adept at working with people at every level, he is respected for his ability to get to the heart of matters, while using the process creatively.

**With a legal background, he is able to help parties assess legal and factual risks where appropriate.**

His many years in business, including engagement with major plcs and other corporate interests in strategy work, enable him to encourage a commercial approach to problem-solving, ensuring that decision-makers can take responsibility for making realistic choices about the outcome.

**Noted as "one of the best teachers of mediation", he also specialises in conflict management training and coaching for senior government officials, civil servants, executives and sports leaders**

. For many years, he has worked with senior civil servants and various parliamentary bodies throughout the UK (including the Westminster and Scottish Parliaments and the Northern Ireland, Welsh and London Assemblies) on effective scrutiny of policy. He was a special adviser on dialogue to the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. He works regularly with senior officials at the Scottish Government on policy and political issues at the highest levels. He has trained Cabinet Office officials in London. He sits on the Stewarding Group of the Citizens Assembly in Scotland.

**He has worked with UK Sport, the English Institute of Sport, Sportscotland, and many sports' governing bodies and athletes for a number of years, particularly in the lead up to the London Olympics.**

He is a founder of [Collaborative Scotland](#), an initiative to bring respectful dialogue to Scottish politics and public affairs, and is the author of its Commitment to Respectful Dialogue. He is a frequent writer and commentator on mediation and collaboration in the political world.

## Mediation

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John has been involved in hundreds of mediations, frequently high value, multi-party, covering a broad range of issues in the commercial and public sectors, finance and banking, corporate management, government and sport. These have included a multiplicity of interests, including commercial contracts, financial instruments, shareholder and boardroom, insurance, construction and engineering, infrastructure, intellectual property, real estate, high performance sport, senior level employment, investor matters, taxation, IT, professional indemnity, agriculture, landlord and tenant, oil and gas, procurement and transport.

He has also facilitated many high-level dialogues in sensitive and complex policy matters (including intra-governmental).

John has recently acted as mediator in complex private/public sector infrastructure/construction and engineering projects with claim values in the £hundreds of millions.

[Click here](#) for examples of John's mediation work.

## Qualifications and awards

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- Practising member of the Scottish Bar from 1986 to 2002. Appointed Queen's Counsel in 1999. Practice at the Bar included commercial contracts, intellectual property, construction contracts, property, valuation for rating, personal injury work, professional negligence and general civil work;
- An internationally-recognised mediation and advocacy coach, has also been described as "*one of the best teachers of mediation*". Extensive involvement in training and coaching mediators and others in the UK and abroad from 1998 onwards;
- Trained in Negotiation at Harvard University under Professor Roger Fisher in 1996;
- Director of Training and Education, Faculty of Advocates, 1994 to 2002: responsible for design, development and delivery of award-winning advocacy and related training courses for the Scottish Bar;
- Member of Judicial Studies Committee in Scotland, 1997 to 2003: responsible for design and leadership of judicial training courses including the first skills training courses for Scottish judges;
- Member of the Standards Commission of the International Mediation Institute; 2008
- Specialist of the Year, Inaugural Scottish Legal Awards February 2003; Mediator of the Year, The Law Awards of Scotland 2009;
- Distinguished Fellow, International Academy of Mediators from 2009 (at whose conferences he is a regular speaker and of whose Spring Conference in Edinburgh 2018 he chaired);
- Honorary Degree, Doctor of Laws, Edinburgh Napier University, 2010;
- Visiting Professor in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, from 2016;
- Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators;
- Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts;
- Regular speaker at the American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Conference and is involved in many other international initiatives.

## Directory Quotes

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- **Who's Who Legal UK Bar Mediation Analysis** has listed John as one of the seven **Global Elite Thought Leaders**, describing him as a "a terrific mediator", distinguished for his "clear understanding of the issues and creativity in finding a solution" and a "spellbinding mediator and great thinker" and "by far the best in the market". His peers comment, "His encouraging and calm way of working brings people along the road of mediation without them feeling under pressure." In the 2017 Analysis, John appeared as one of the four "Most Highly Regarded Individuals" in the Leading Silks category, describing him as a "thought leader" in the area of mediation, citing his "keen intellect", "preparation to get at core issues" and "massive wealth of experience in difficult negotiation situations". One respondent was quoted saying, "John is the best mediator I have met and has brought about a settlement in two cases which I thought resolution was impossible." Who's Who Legal of the world's leading commercial mediators says "John Sturrock QC is "the name everyone knows in Scotland", and an effective and well-respected mediator."
- **Listed in Band 1 in the Best of UK in Chambers UK Guide to the Legal Profession**, John is "singled out for praise by his clients for his relaxed... approach at outset" and yet for his ability to "still push hard to get a deal at the end of the day". He has been described as "'a highly intelligent and skilful mediator' who retains a market-leading reputation. His diverse practice includes mediating professional negligence, employment and commercial contract disputes in a broad range of sectors, both in the UK and overseas. One observer says: 'He absolutely knew what we were after and was brilliant in getting both parties at the table to open up. He got the best resolution possible for both parties and gave fantastic support and advice.'" The directory has also described him as "a leading figure in the UK mediation market", praised for being "flexible in his approach and for always remaining sensitive to the differing interests of the parties involved", a "fantastic listener" who has "a wealth of experience handling complex commercial contract, IP and environmental disputes, as well as mediations arising in the construction and property sectors." and "a wonderful communicator with much experience of complex commercial issues". "He is often engaged in complex, multiparty disputes and his experience covers contracts, IP, property, construction, employment and professional negligence. Sources describe him as "a genuine innovator, who always has the topical issues on his radar." Although most prolific in Scotland, he has mediated across the UK ."

- **Legal 500** describes John as *“the leading Scottish mediator; he has tremendous presence and personality but his technical skills as a mediator are also excellent”*. He *“can hold the room and have the parties keep their eyes on the prize; he not only knows the law but is good with parties, and brings authority and ability to the role of mediator’*. Sturrock’s broad practice extends to the rest of the UK, Ireland, mainland Europe, and the Middle East and Africa, and covers commercial contracts, construction, IP, property, and professional negligence. He also mediates banking, sport, planning, environment, agriculture, and public sector issues.” He is *“engaging and extremely pleasant to work with”*, noting he *“prepares thoroughly for mediations; he grasps the issues and is sympathetic to each party’s position, but is not afraid to take a tough line when required”*. They have also noted: *“The ‘highly impressive’ John Sturrock QC ‘has the gravitas to win the confidence of both sides from the outset’*. Clients note his ability to employ *‘insight, judgement, and emotional intelligence’* and *‘to know instinctively both when to push the parties hard, and when to back off and let discussions between the parties bridge gaps’*.”

## Publications

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Extensive – see [www.core-solutions.com/resources](http://www.core-solutions.com/resources)

*A Mediator’s Musings on Mediation, Negotiation, Politics and a Changing World*, published 2020. Available on [Amazon](#)

*Practical mediation: A Guide for Mediators and Others*, by Jonathan Dingle with John Sephton, published by Law Brief Publishing in 2017.

*Essays on Mediation: Dealing with Disputes in the 21st Century*, published by Wolters Kluwer in 2016.

Publisher of *Thinking Differently: Making a Difference using Mediation* – Core’s 10th anniversary book, edited by David Lee.

John is also a frequent contributor of articles to newspapers and journals.