

"Going for Gold"

Executive Chairman Robert Willis, Managing Director Billy Bennington and Development Director Richard Willis look forward to an Olympic year.



The year 2012 cannot come soon enough for local independent insurance brokers Willis & Company. Founded thirty three years ago by Robert Willis, it has been carefully preparing for the passing of the baton to the next generation and sees next year as crucial to its continued success.

Robert, who remains actively involved as Executive Chairman, is delighted with the way the business has developed. He says: "Having made the decision to go for growth during

what has become one of the most protracted soft insurance markets on record, we have managed to acquire a number of additional high profile clients who have taken on board not only our traditional core values of integrity and professionalism but also our innovative approach to areas such as accident investigation. In terms of our investment in people we have always tried to engage quality individuals in all areas of our operations to ensure a consistently high service level to clients.

Our succession planning is therefore a continuous process and whilst we now have three other family members in the business we have always sought to recruit quality people from outside into key roles to ensure that career progression is based on meritorious principles. We are very fortunate to have a strong mix of talented individuals at successive age levels across the business. From Directors Keith Hynds and Peter Lennon who joined the company on the same day over

twenty years ago to Divisional Directors Tracey Carson and David Stevenson and of course, Richard Willis, we have a very strong team both inside and outside which we are constantly strengthening. In our Financial Services Division lead by John Bedford, we have Stephen Willis on a development path so that there is planned succession there also. More recently we have decided to recruit graduate trainees into both the general and Financial Services sides of the business and this offers the additional potential to develop our own talent for the future properly trained but also well educated in the Willis & Company ethos.

The formation of Accident Investigation Services (AIS) under Claims Director Mark Willis is in line with our strategic aim to maintain the high level of service and close communication our clients want and which is often missing these days. Historically the broking sector hasn't been good at articulating the added value it brings to the claims process. With AIS I was convinced we could deliver a very tangible improvement and the early signs are very encouraging"

Managing Director Billy Bennington was appointed three years ago and has played a major part in raising the profile of the company in the wider



Executive Chairman Robert Willis (centre front) with Managing Director Billy Bennington and Operations Director Peter Lennon. (Rear left to right) Claims Director Mark Willis, Customer Services Director Keith Hynds and Sales & Development Director Richard Willis.

business community. "Although highly regarded by existing clients and the insurance sector generally over many years, we needed to reach a wider audience so we embarked on a major PR campaign which has proved very successful. The emphasis on our existing strengths in Construction through our regular contributions to *Specify* preceded our appointment as sole recommended broker to the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) and demonstrates the value of overall strategic planning.

There have been quite a few highlights over the years but we are especially pleased with the achievement of Chartered Status, the industry's gold standard and of course our very recent success as the only winner from Northern Ireland at the UK Broker Awards in London.

Whilst all of this positive publicity is very welcome Willis & Company are acutely aware that in Northern Ireland the most effective PR comes through word of mouth. News of the successful retention of existing clients and the acquisition of new business tends to travel quickly so our investment in the profile raising coupled with good growth is a strong message.

With 40 staff now including our Financial Services Division and AIS we have consolidated our position and are much better resourced for this next important phase in the company's development."

As one of the few remaining truly independent local insurance brokers

concentrating on larger corporate and commercial business, Willis & Company are well used to competing with national or global brokers. Sales & Development Director Richard Willis says: "Having grown up listening to Dad dealing with complex issues for very demanding yet appreciative and progressively loyal clients, we are now motivated more than ever to grow the business further whilst preserving the core values that have stood us in such great stead. Having specific responsibility for new business I have had the opportunity to talk to a good cross section of

local companies about their insurance needs and priorities. Whilst price is always understandably high on their agenda we have seen an increasing awareness of the need to get the right combination of cover and service with the correct information forming the basis of the contract. Willis & Company has a reputation built over 30 years and the preservation of this by the next generation is an onerous challenge which we take very seriously. We are very fortunate to have the current team of people all pulling in the same direction and looking forward to the future.

Our recent successes demonstrate that even very large local businesses are happy to deal with local brokers provided they have the technical expertise and the ability to deliver cost effective and innovative risk solutions. I also believe we tend to develop a strong empathy with other owner managed businesses that face similar challenges to ourselves. For example, we have long held the view that wherever possible local businesses should support each other to preserve and create local employment and this is the message we will continue to broadcast."

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SERVICES – MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

Claims Director Mark Willis introduces a new Willis & Company team and a new approach.

"The real test of any product is how well it works. In insurance that means an efficient, pro-active and positive claims experience. With this in mind, Willis & Co. have set up a new division as an exclusive service to our clients. AIS will be involved in all aspects of a claim from beginning to end which also allows clients to be an integral part of the process, ensuring the claims product is delivered accurately and within an efficient time frame.

The AIS team has been carefully assembled to enhance our offering across the major insurance classes of Liability, Motor and Property and will deliver:

- A 24/7 countrywide response.
- One point of contact.
- Immediate and pro-active in depth investigation including locus reports where required.
- Reduction in the life cycle of liability claims through early resolution, reducing overall cost.
- Provision of guidelines to improve data capture on accident circumstances etc.
- Emergency repairs and access to network of quality approved supply chain.
- Regular progress updates.

LIABILITY

In line with policy requirements, all incidents occurring which may give rise to a claim must be notified and early intervention in the process is key to reducing the overall claims cost. The AIS investigator will make immediate contact and where appropriate obtain all information

which insurers deem relevant should a claim arise at a later stage.

Our ethos is to avoid costly legal proceedings where possible through early settlement. This pro-active approach where successful also reduces the long term impact on premium.

MOTOR

The key area for reducing costs to the insurers is obtaining the Third Party details and avoiding unnecessary hire and solicitors costs. Our claims investigator is on hand to collect and provide this information to your insurers.

We also recognise that controlling costs means your vehicles are back on the road as soon as possible. We will liaise with both the Third Party and approved repairers to see that vehicles are repaired quickly and at a reasonable repair rate.

PROPERTY

Damage to client's own property is too often the source of many grievances. The ability to repair, reinstate or replace property as quickly as possible is key to letting you continue to focus on your own business.

Loss adjuster contractor networks are often perceived as increasing costs unnecessarily as there is no competitive tender and their privileged position means deadlines and quality of work is not always up to the standard we would expect for our clients.

We are confident that AIS will improve our client's experience of the claims process and ensure that the insurance product delivers the protection vital to the success of their business."



Willis & Company's new division Accident Investigation Services (AIS). Mark Willis, Claims Director (back right) with Gary Mercer and front (left to right) Sheelagh Foy, Ruth Gilmartin and Roisin Mercer.

For further information on Willis & Company, contact Jonathan Gilmartin, David Stevenson or Keith Hynds at:

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