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# The UK General Election 2017

*Lessons learned by a Comparison of the manifestos of the political parties*

**Article by David Bowden**

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## The UK General Election 2017

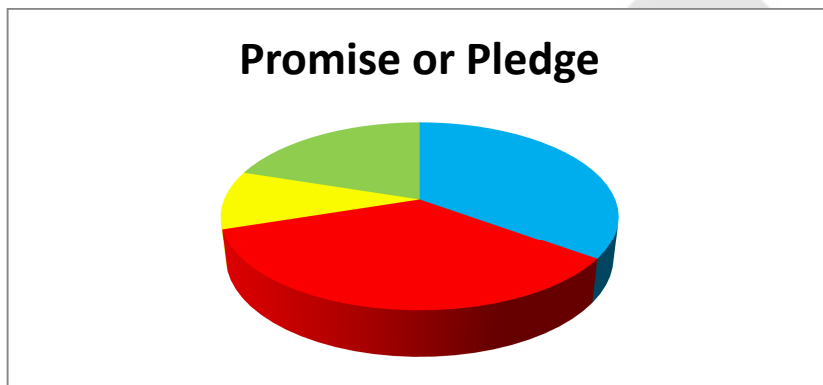
*Lessons learned by a Comparison of the manifestos of the political parties*

### Executive speed read summary

So far the 3 main parties – the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats have published their manifestos setting out what they would do if they won the general election on 8 June 2017. The Welsh Nationalists have also published theirs. UKIP, the SNP and the Green Party will be publishing theirs shortly. It is interesting to see a number of key themes in all manifestos with their numerous promises or pledges and copious mentions of schools, work and local issues. With Brexit still a contentious issue it is surprising that the Conservatives are not keen to talk about it. All parties talk a lot about tax and spend each with a far greater focus on tax than spending. This time around we see talk in the manifestos of issues that politicians don't usually talk about such as drugs, cannabis, pubs and breakfasts.

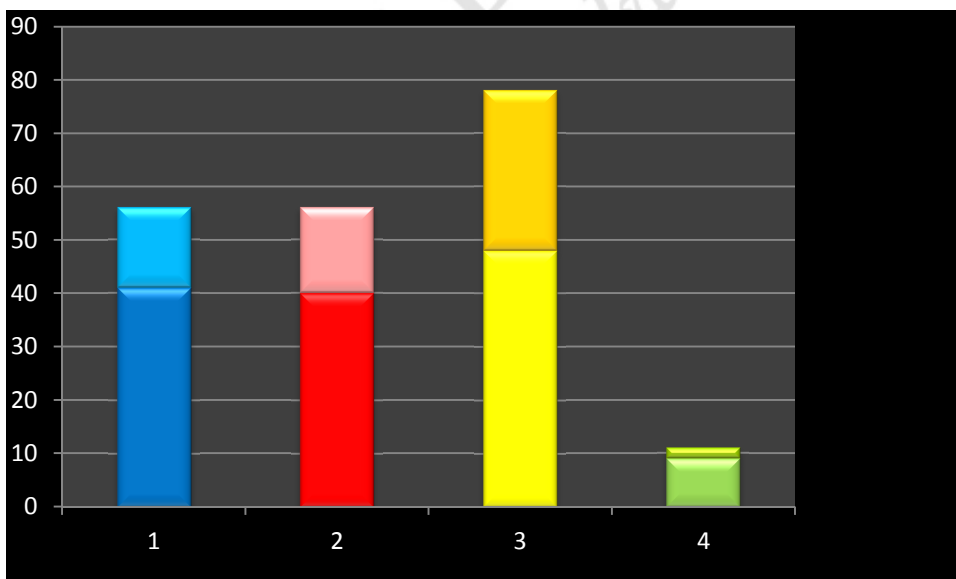
### **Beware the politician that makes promises they can't keep!**

The Conservative manifesto uses the word '*pledge*' once and this time it has 6 promises (but made only 1 in 2015). Plaid Cymru has 0 pledges but 4 promises. The Labour Party matches the Conservatives this time with only 6 promises as against the 11 it made in 2015. The Liberal Democrats are the meanest with 2 promises (they made 11 in 2015) but no pledges. I am not a pedant, so I have combined all the mentions of '*pledge*' or '*promise*' (but stripping out mentions of '*compromise*') in this first pie chart.



### **Whatever happened to tax and spend?**

The paler tips of these stalks are the spend and the darker lower part is the tax. Labour and Conservative are about the same on both tax and spend. Surprisingly the Liberal Democrats are now the tax and spend party. Plaid Cymru mentions tax the least and spend even less.

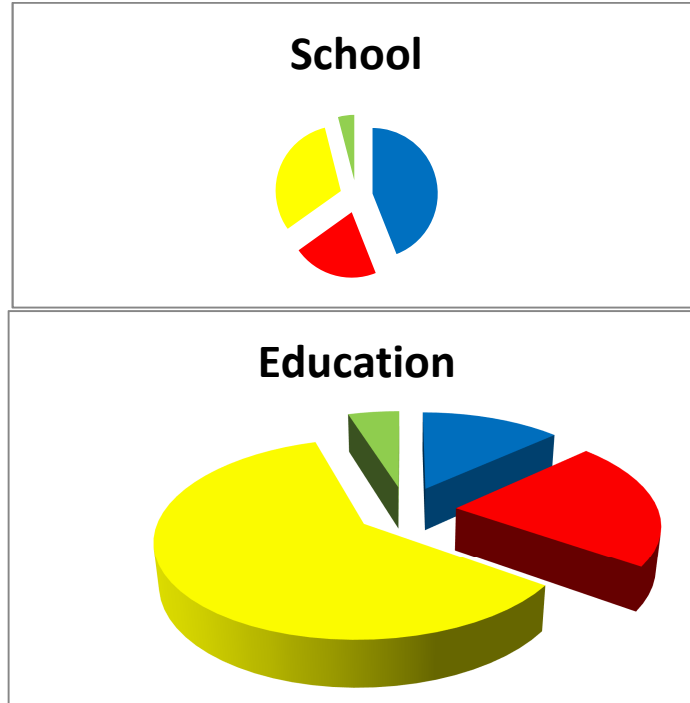


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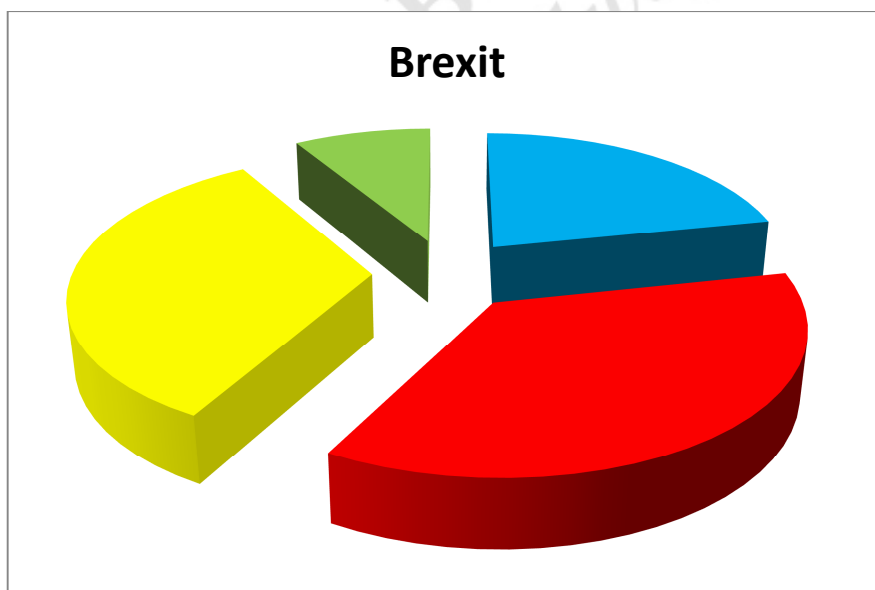
#### **Tony Blair got elected in 1997 with a promise of 'Education, education, education'**

This is so old hat in 2017. No-one wins elections talking about education anymore. The 21st century politician must talk about schools. The Conservatives can't shut up about them in their manifesto! The Liberal Democrats are less keen to talk about schools but can't shut up about education. Labour wants to talk about both in equal measure. Plaid Cymru is the most shy about talking about either of these 2 things.



#### **What about Brexit then?**

As the only party that still remains committed to the UK remaining in the European Union, you would expect the Liberal Democrats to be the party who wants to talk about Brexit the most. Whilst it figures 23 times in their manifesto, the Labour party mentions it the most. Oddly given that Theresa May gave Brexit as her reason for calling this election, it features only 15 times in the Conservative's manifesto.

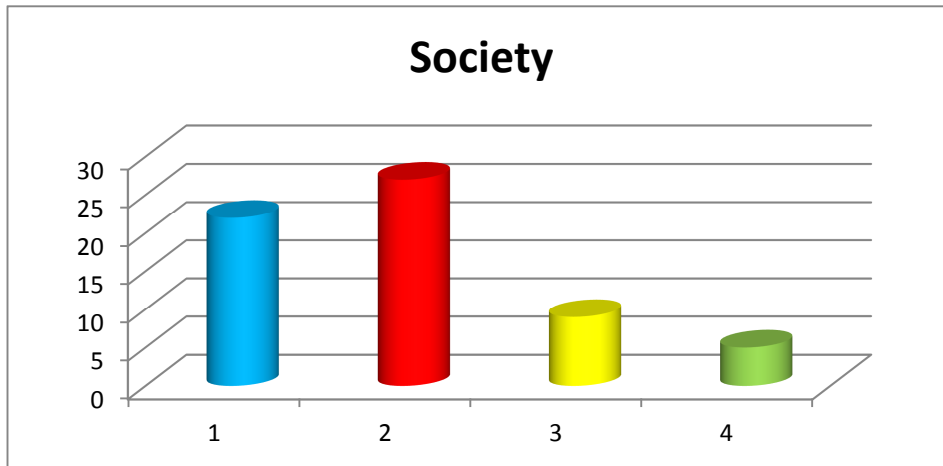


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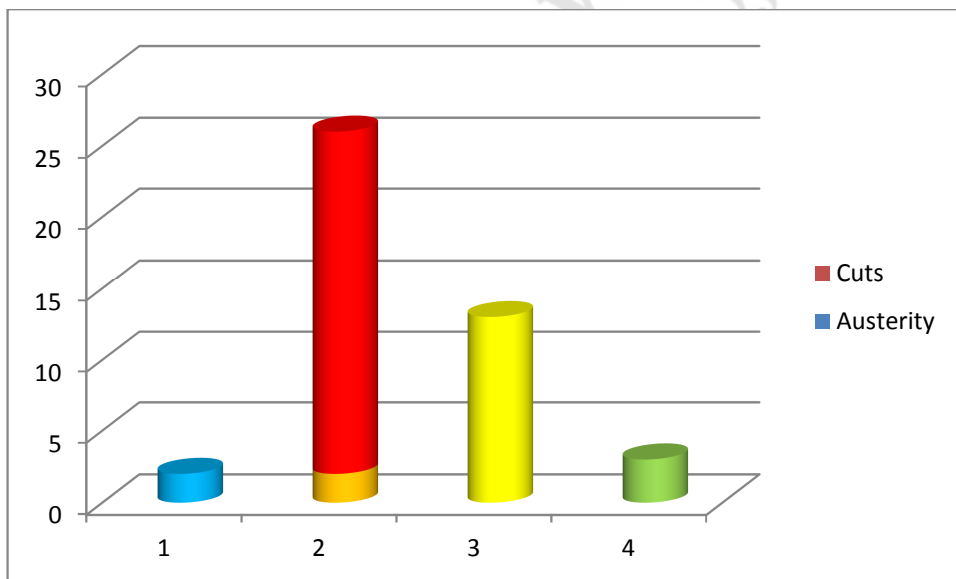
#### What happened to that other B-word, the Big Society?

The Conservatives were so keen to talk about this in the 2010 election and were still keen to talk about it in 2015 with 5 mentions. This time around in 2017 no party talks about the Big Society at all. Perhaps they still have it in Notting Hill or Witney. Mrs. Thatcher is famous for saying that there was no such thing as society. If you are a Conservative under Mrs May then this is no longer true today because their manifesto mentions society 22 times. Labour mentions it far more – 27 times – with its talk of a broken society and a promise to create a fairer one. Neither the Liberal Democrats nor Plaid Cymru are keen to talk about it much. We'll have to see if talk about society with the voters is seen as a vote winner.



#### Surely talk about austerity and cuts must be a big vote winner?

In the 2015 election it was left to the SNP, Greens and UKIP to bang the austerity cuts drum with SNP and Greens wanting an end to austerity and the Greens proposing tax rises as a result. This time around from the 4 manifestos published so far, only Labour talks about austerity – with 2 mentions – itself quite austere. When it comes to cuts, Labour is not backwards in coming forwards with a barn storming 24 mentions with the Liberal Democrats on their tail with 13 mentions. In 2015, the Conservative manifesto mentions the cuts once – but that was to talk about tax cuts. In much the same vein, this time they mention cuts only twice.

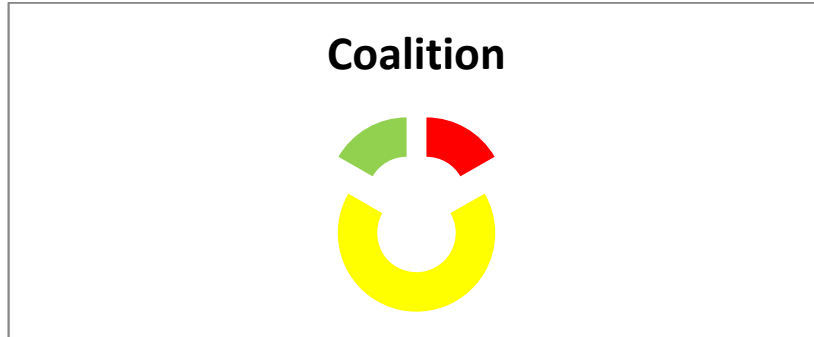


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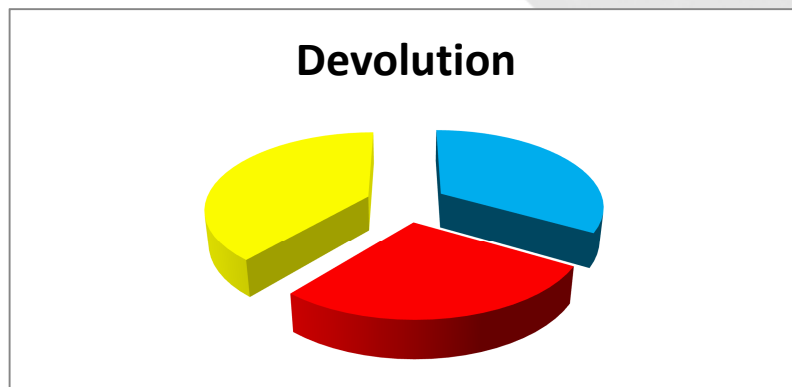
#### **With the election predicted to be a landslide, is anyone talking about coalition?**

In the 2015 General Election, the Conservative Party did not mention coalition once in their manifesto. They repeat this in 2017 with no mention of coalition perhaps that is because Mrs May is so confident of a landslide. In 2015 Labour did not mention coalition at all but in 2017 they mention it once as do Plaid Cymru. Not surprisingly, the Liberal Democrats are most keen to talk about another coalition if the electorate will forgive them for the 2010 one.



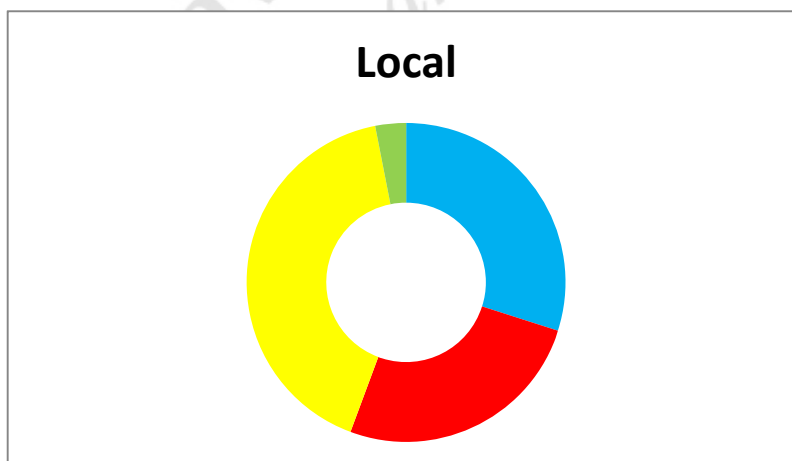
#### **What about devolution?**

Surprisingly the Welsh Nationalists do not mention this at all. The other 3 parties mention it an almost equal number of times with the Liberal Democrats just out in front with 7 mentions.



#### **Is it all about local issues on the doorstep?**

All the parties' manifestos are full of talk about local things from local hospitals to local schools to local parks. The Liberal Democrats win the award with 80 mentions of local. Labour and Conservative mention local things an almost equal amount of times but Plaid Cymru talks about local things only 6 times.

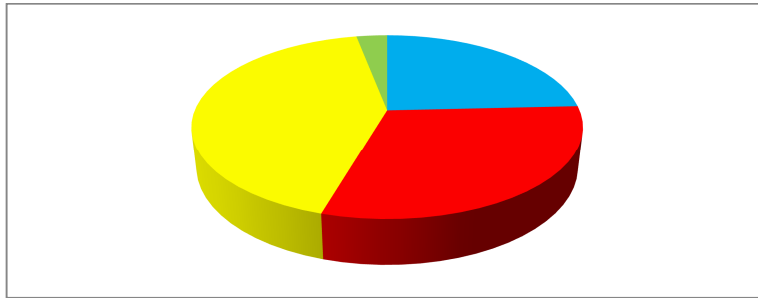


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#### **No sex please, we're British!**

This time around all political parties want to talk about sex. The Liberal Democrats talk about sex workers, Labour sex discrimination and others talking about sexualisation on the internet. Fortunately, this has all proved too much for Plaid Cymru who mentions it only once.



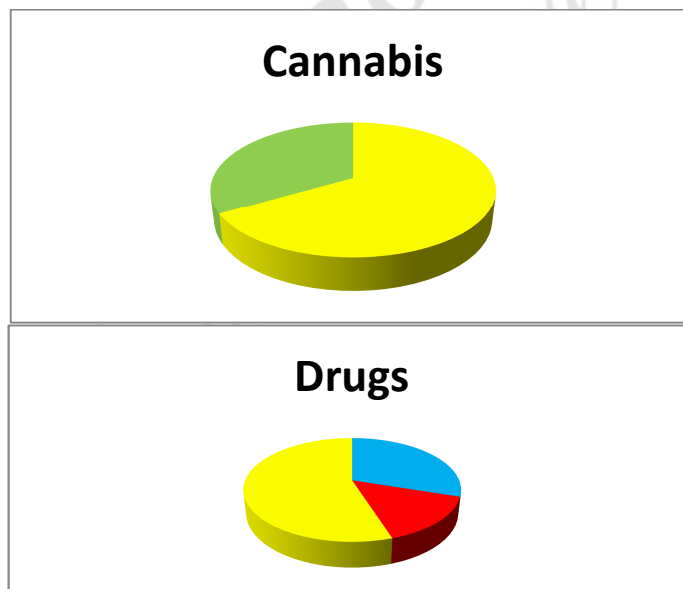
#### **Shall we just go to the pub instead and drown our sorrows?**

Not a day goes by without another pub closing down to be converted into flats. Neither the Conservatives nor Plaid Cymru are concerned about this. Labour mention pubs twice in its manifesto – whether its real ale trade union supporters had any influence on this is not clear.



#### **The drugs don't work, they just make it worse**

Only the Liberal Democrats and Welsh Nationalists talk about cannabis in their manifestos with the Liberals wanting to follow the example of certain American states and legalise it. When it comes to drugs for the NHS, Plaid Cymru is nowhere to be seen. Again the Liberals are most keen to talk about drugs (be they medicinal or recreational) with Labour and Conservatives talking about them about equally.

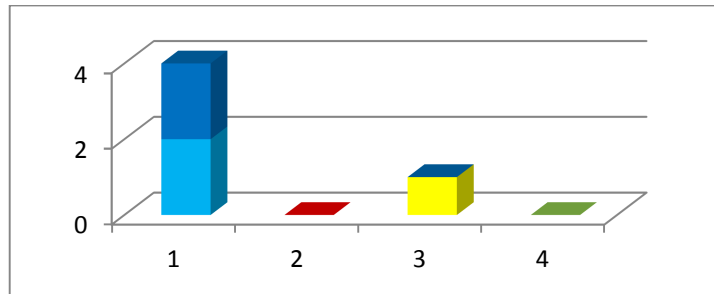


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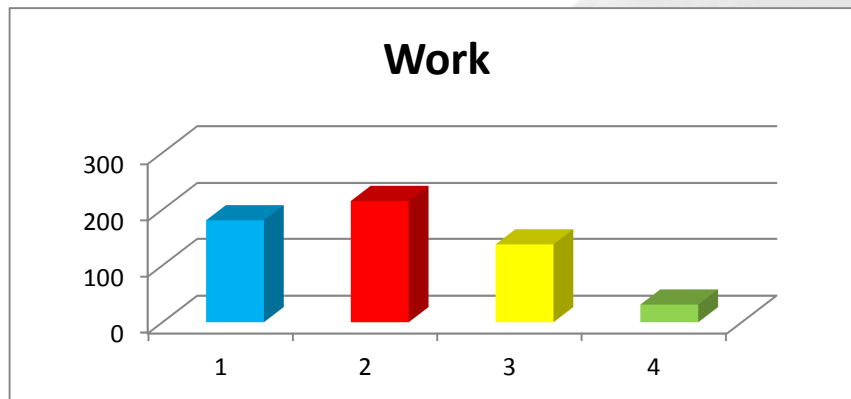
#### There's no such thing as a free lunch

If you are a Labour or Plaid Cymru supporter this certainly hangs true with their manifestos not mentioning lunch (or breakfast) at all. The Liberal Democrats mention breakfast once but not lunch. Perhaps it's all the cookbooks Mrs May has at home in Maidenhead, but the Conservatives love to talk about both meals.

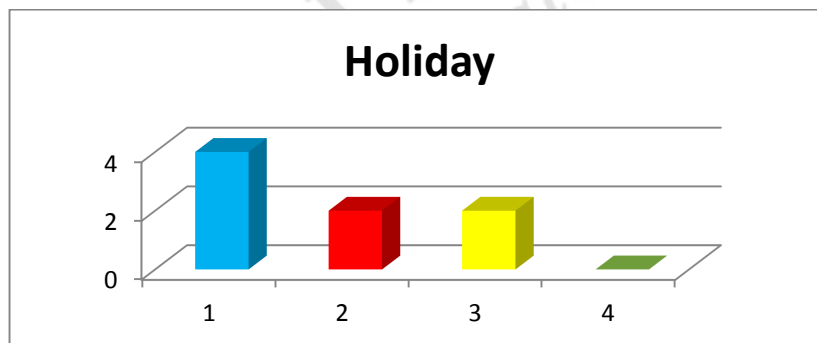


#### All work and no play make Jack a dull boy

The manifestos are full of work with Labour mentioning it 215 times with its talk of a society that works for the many not the few. The Conservatives are not keen on feckless welfare claimants and so are not far behind with 181 mentions. With all the grants rolling in to prop up the Welsh Assembly's pet spending schemes, not surprisingly Plaid Cymru are the least willing to talk about work.



When it comes to holidays, Labour trailed the blaze in its manifesto with its promise of 4 extra bank holidays. It is surprising then that the Conservatives have pipped them to the post with 4 mention of holiday in their manifesto. Plaid Cymru don't mention holidays at all.



22 May 2017

David Bowden is a solicitor-advocate and runs [David Bowden Law](http://DavidBowdenLaw.com) which is authorised and regulated by the Bar Standards Board to provide legal services and conduct litigation. He is the cases editor for the Encyclopedia of Consumer Credit Law. If you need advice or assistance in relation to consumer credit, financial services or litigation he can be contacted at [info@DavidBowdenLaw.com](mailto:info@DavidBowdenLaw.com) or by telephone on (01462) 431444.