

# Historic secret judge appointment case could 'blow up old boys' network'



## Secret Soundings to be challenged in court this week

A landmark case on the secretive way judges are appointed begins this week, in a hearing that could 'blow up the old boys' network' in the judiciary.

Kate Thomas, a judge with 30 years' experience in the legal profession, will challenge the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) over its use of 'secret soundings' in the Court of Appeal.



Under the current system, the JAC takes 'secret soundings' before appointing a new judge – essentially comments and views which the prospective candidates can neither read nor respond to.

Ms Thomas, a member of GMB's dedicated branch for members of the judiciary, will argue the system is flawed and unfair.

Leading voices from across the legal profession, including GMB, the Law Society, the Society of Black Lawyers, the Society of Asian Lawyers, and the Association of Women Barristers, have united in condemnation of secret soundings, which are seen as a continuation of the 'old boys network' and a barrier to diversity on the bench.

**Stuart Fegan, GMB Senior Organiser said:**

"How can it be right the deciding factor in appointing a judge can be anonymous, secret feedback with no right of reply or even a right to know what has been said?

"It goes against everything our justice system stands for.

"This case is about dismantling a system that perpetuates appointments of white, male and privately educated judges, whilst excluding others.

"It could blow up the whole old boys' network.

"GMB always seeks to highlight injustice, bullying and discrimination wherever it exists, and this outdated practice needs to be consigned to the history books."

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