



John Sturrock KC



The founder and senior mediator of Core, John is recognised as a pioneer in mediation and as one of the leading mediators in the UK, with an international reputation. He is also much in demand as a trainer and coach.

A “spellbinding mediator” and “thought leader” with a “keen intellect”, “prepared to get at core issues” and “massive wealth of experience in difficult negotiation situations” who is “by far the best in the market”.

“John is the best mediator I have met and has brought about a settlement in two cases in which I thought resolution was impossible.”

As a mediator, he is highly regarded for:

- **Quality:** a highly professional service, building relationships with the clients and advisers from the first point of contact, with strong emphasis on effective preparation for problem-solving.
- **Accessibility,** with an easy manner throughout; friendly, astute guidance and support for all participating in mediation, based on years of experience; works easily with people of all stages and ages.
- **On the mediation day,** early engagement through private meetings and, usually, breakfast with parties and advisers, striking a business-like and realistic, personal tone.
- **Ability to be direct and rigorous** when necessary and to get to the heart of matters, while maintaining dignity and respect in the process.
- **Highly intelligent probing** of the issues, using sharp legal mind, without the law dominating, and focussing on the commercial aspects and realistic risks for all concerned.
- **Thoughtful use of creative negotiation tools and techniques** especially when impasse or deadlock arises, with a willingness to persevere.
- **His many years in business,** including engagement with major companies and other corporate interests in strategy work, enabling him to encourage a commercial approach to problem-solving and ensuring that decision-makers can take responsibility for making realistic and fully-informed choices about the outcome.

For illustrations of John’s mediation and other work, see [here](#).

Feedback from Directories:

- Who’s Who Legal UK Bar Mediation Analysis 2018 lists John as one of the seven Global Elite Thought Leaders, describing him as 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, especially in Scotland. 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’.”*

What clients say:

- *“I wanted to express my deepest thanks for your invaluable contribution to the mediation process. In 15 years we have achieved not one single concession and to achieve an outcome such as that we have done is flabbergasting.”*
- *“Many thanks, as ever, for your efforts yesterday, which were very much appreciated by our client and ourselves, who are very happy with the outcome – and I couldn’t agree more about this freeing our client to get on with his life. This was a perfect example of the benefits of collegiate working through the mediation process to achieve a resolution which would have been virtually impossible through the traditional litigation route.”*
- *“We are indebted to you for your patience, wise counsel, and dedication to the process, not to mention the element of levity which you brought to proceedings.”*
- *“Thank you enormously for your contribution as Mediator – it has saved vast expense, energy and doubtless nervous exhaustion for all. A great advert for mediation in general, and Core in particular.”*
- *“I would like to say that I have much admiration for your handling of this mediation. It was never going to be easy in light of the personalities involved and that it has amazingly*

settled is undoubtedly down to your great effort. I doubt most other mediators would have stuck with it like you did."

- *"We were very impressed (if I may say so) by your skill and professionalism in handling the matter yesterday and particularly by the fact that you took upon yourself much of the very hard work of negotiation to arrive at an acceptable resolution."*
- *"Thank you so much for all your efforts yesterday. Your contribution was invaluable."*
- *"Given the complex nature of the dispute and the satisfactory outcome, John has to be congratulated on the care and professionalism he demonstrated throughout the process."*
- *"John had the ability to keep the process alive and move it forward in extremely difficult circumstances."*
- *"His organisation of the process was a strength, and thoughtfulness on the release of information."*
- *"Very adept at the devil's advocate game."*
- *"Clarity; "control" of process and ability to focus parties and perhaps, most importantly, patience."*
- *"Huge experience of the mediation process."*
- *"The ability to put succinctly the possible consequences of each party's position in getting them to think of alternatives"*
- *"He had a very conciliatory manner and at the same time had a good grasp of the issues."*
- *"Gained and kept the confidence of our client even when testing our client's case."*
- *"Ability to understand detail and to keep the process moving forward. Also able to make valid points at appropriate times without being long winded. A very capable mediator who contributed greatly to the process."*
- *"As ever, your command of the process and astute judgement was absolutely invaluable in steering the parties through an at times fraught and delicate situation."*
- *"During the two-day meditation, John found the right pace and tone to deal with emotions while progressing in negotiations. He was "pushing" and "pulling" the process in the most effective way, dealing with legal and non-legal issues, both listening to and challenging the parties. I very much appreciated John's expertise in the field."*
- *"The agreement was signed at around 9.15 last night. My brain was fried by that point but my recollection is that the main protagonists ended the mediation with a handshake. It was certainly the case that everyone left in good spirits.....We had hoped to achieve a settlement but had not expected that it would include agreeing a price for the sale of the land. That was a great outcome. This was my clients' first experience of mediation. It was a very positive experience for them and they were interested and impressed with the process and with the way you conducted it. Thank you very much."*
- *"I am convinced that a proof etc. would have meant that at least one of the parties would have been very upset indeed... Mediation, when you see it in action (and done in your very upbeat and practical style) has to be something that all lawyers need to consider in cases like this one."*

Mediation Experience:

- As the leading commercial mediator in Scotland, and as a door tenant with Brick Court Chambers in London, with an internationally recognised practice, John has acted as mediator in hundreds of disputes in the UK, mainland Europe, the Middle East and Africa.
- Mediator of choice in high value and commercially complex, often multi-party, matters – see lists below - and other sensitive and complex matters; has also facilitated many high-level strategic and political dialogues.
- Trained and accredited with CEDR in 1996, IMI Certified Mediator, since leaving active practice at the Scottish Bar in 2002, has pursued a full-time career in mediation and high-level coaching and training.
- Member of the Singapore International Mediation Centre Panel of Mediators.
- Member of UK Sport Resolutions Panel of Mediators, member of the Standards Commission of the International Mediation Institute (IMI).

Experience as mediator and facilitator in disputes and differences including the following matters:

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| • commercial contracts | • employment and workplace | • fund management |
| • intellectual property | • public sector including procurement | • valuation of companies |
| • land and property | • transport and infrastructure | • information technology |
| • banking, finance and investment | • sport and sports administration | • church and charitable organisations |
| • insolvency | • higher and secondary education | • environment and planning |
| • construction, building and engineering | • commercial property and leasing | • agriculture and rural matters |
| • oil and gas | • armed forces | • family business and succession |
| • health service and medical negligence | • professional services | |
| • insurance | • professional indemnity | |
| • board level management and governance | | |

Career, Selected Appointments and Awards:

- 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 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;
- 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 2009;
- 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.

Feedback to the International Mediation Institute said this:

All feedback suggests that John Sturrock's skill and reputation is unparalleled in the Scottish market and that he is well recommended by clients there and elsewhere. He is perceived as being able to help clients achieve results which would otherwise have proved impossible. He is regarded as the most experienced and highly skilled mediator operating in Scotland, with an extensive practice elsewhere in the UK and a growing reputation in many other parts of the world.

John builds rapport with parties quickly and effectively shows empathy with them while remaining impartial at all times. His style is both approachable and robust and he manages to stay optimistic throughout the process. Clients speak of his ability to combine a directness and rigour in getting to the heart of the issues, with a genuine respect, empathy and warmth for those involved. He is also said to be engaged and committed, and not afraid to give a steer to the negotiations.

He has good knowledge of background law (as a QC) and also a good understanding of commercial factors and a good manner with parties. It is said that clients enjoy the mediation process with John. He has an ability to "read" a case perfectly and his key USP is said to be in identifying instinctively the right approach to handling the mediation.

He is recognised for his ability quickly to focus on critical issues and to convey complex material in a simple manner and for his skill in pulling together widely disparate threads and knowing when and how to take matters forward. He adapts to fit the dynamic of the particular dispute and the style of the parties and their advisers.

John is acutely aware of the dynamic of the lawyer/client relationship and understands the pressures for advisers, particularly with a challenging client. In one matter, it was noted that he remained in contact with parties after the mediation day to assist them in reaching an agreement.

Outside of commercial mediation, his work with legislatures, sporting bodies and religious organisations gives him a valuable breadth of experience and insight.