

IJGlobal Awards 2019 – The Allen & Overy Interview

Angus Leslie Melville

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Allen & Overy is a mainstay of the IJGlobal Awards agenda across all regions having for decades played a pivotal role in the delivery of infrastructure and energy around the world.

Having been instrumental in the evolution of project finance and the procurement of many billions of dollars of investments, it comes as little surprise to see it feature prominently once again in the IJ Roll of Honour for deals closed in the 2019 calendar year.

A&O advised on a slew of deals that closed last year and was voted IJGlobal Legal Adviser of the Year for the MENA region by our team of independent judges who met earlier this year in Dubai.

One of the judges said of the firm: “With A&O you get that level of expertise and all-round professionalism you expect of a seasoned magic circle firm in this sector,” adding “they bring a flair and a can-do approach that is what you need at the table”.

Another Dubai judge said: “You expect to see A&O on transactions in our region. In truth, if you look around and they’re not there, that’s a good reason to start asking questions about the deal.”

As well as winning MENA law firm of the year, A&O dominated the 2019 *IJGlobal* league tables for infrastructure finance having closed considerably more transactions than any other legal adviser in the region, cornering a 21.5% market share.

Ian Ingram-Johnson (known to most as IJ, which is singularly appropriate for this title) and Tim Scales are key A&O partners who have played pivotal roles in cementing the firm’s reputation in the region as part of the largest Projects team globally.

Tim (pictured right) heads the firm’s Africa Group and has been working on projects across the continent for more than 20 years; while Ian focuses on the Middle East and is predominantly active across power, petrochemicals, oil and gas, transport and infrastructure.



A&O has an impressive and diverse bench of new talent, evidenced by a number of rising stars on the IJ award-winning deals. They were, of course, delighted to (virtually) accept the MENA award recognising their achievements over the course of 2019, having acted on award winning deals like BAPCO, Hamriyah IPP, DEWA IV, Dumat Al Jandal and Guinea Alumina Project.

However, speaking from their homes during the coronavirus lockdown, Tim and IJ are keen to celebrate the future at a firm where the status of infrastructure and energy is underpinned by A&O’s global head of the projects practice – Gareth Price – having earlier this year been elevated to managing partner for the entire firm.



As IJ (pictured left) says of this: “We are taking a number of the sector driven initiatives that started under Gareth’s stewardship and enhancing them so that clients get the cross geography, cross sector, cross product expertise that they demand including the establishment of a location and product agnostic board of partners to further enhance the transfer of knowledge to clients across the globe.”

A&O has pursued a strategy of ensuring it has the knowledge set on the ground in the geographies it works in, making it clients’ first choice on transactions – whatever style of infra/energy deal that may be.

Tim is of the same mind: “Projects are evolving as a product line and we are now deploying the specialised sector knowledge that we develop through greenfield project development and financing to later stages of the asset lifecycle. This knowledge is key to our offering in the M&A market, as we see assets in the infra and energy space being traded.”

As they say, clients nowadays seek a broader scope of experience than a profile littered with, say, greenfield PPP or IPP financings. They need a honed skillset built on broad foundations.

“Many of our clients are looking at different levels of advisory in terms of basic project development, project contract skillset, construction knowledge, complex greenfield project financings and – increasingly – a huge seam of developers and sponsors trading assets,” says IJ.

“That underlying asset and country knowledge is absolutely critical. It’s not about the greenfield piece, it’s about the entire value chain.”

Interestingly, Covid-19 has brought the firm closer together – enabling greater collaboration and cross-pollination among teams.

“We have been forced to get to grips with collaboration platforms in a way we have never in the past,” says Tim. “For a global network like ours, that creates extraordinary opportunities to embrace the multiplier effect of having specialists deployed across the globe. This is a real opportunity to take the collaboration for which we are renowned on to a whole new level in a market that is constantly evolving.”

Given the continual evolution of infra/energy asset classes around the globe, this is a clear indicator that A&O has a mandate to position itself in a dominant role for legal advisory across the sector in its many guises.

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