

Asset recovery pair joins Cooley in London

Tom Webb, 12 January 2015



James Maton and Laurence Harris.

Former Edwards Wildman partners James Maton and Laurence Harris have joined Cooley in London, as the firm launches its UK practice.

Asset recovery and anti-corruption partners Maton, 43, and Harris, 49, joined the firm alongside 12 other Edwards Wildman partners, on 12 January – the same day Edwards Wildman merged with Locke Lord, creating Locke Lord Edwards. GIR understands the lawyers' discussions with Cooley began before Edwards Wildman and Locke Lord initiated talks about a possible merger.

Speaking to GIR, Maton, 43, said: "Cooley is an incredibly exciting firm, with a pre-eminent position in technology, life sciences and venture capital, and it's great to have joined them."

Maton and Harris mainly act for governments attempting to recover the proceeds of corruption, and also conduct internal investigations of suspected corruption for corporate clients.

Maton said the UK team will take its government-focused asset recovery practice to the US. "Cooley have a fantastic internal investigations, compliance and anti-

corruption practice, and we look forward to help build out that practice further internationally.”

Maton and Harris have previously acted for the government of the Turks & Caicos Islands, a British overseas territory, to recover assets lost through alleged corruption. According to a UK government report, ministers and government officials allegedly sold land in return for bribes. Edwards Wildman helped the government recover 3,000 acres and US\$23 million in cash so far.

The pair have also helped the Nigerian government to recover assets allegedly stolen by former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha and his family and associates. Maton and Harris regularly worked with partner Antonio Suarez-Martinez, who left the firm for GlaxoSmithKline in November 2014.

Harris, who led discussions for the Edwards Wildman team that joined Cooley, said in a statement: “Most of us have practised together for years. We have all been struck by the quality and genuineness of Cooley’s leadership and wider partnership, as well as our new London-based colleagues. We look forward to being part of building something special here in London.”

Along with the Edwards Wildman partners, Cooley also welcomed five Morrison & Foerster London partners on 12 January. Justin Stock, former head of Morrison & Foerster’s London corporate practice, will lead the new Cooley office.

In a statement, Cooley chief executive Joe Conroy said: “Cooley plans to make a big impact in London. We have brought together partners who are the very best in their fields, and who share our values and approach to achieving success for our global client base.”