THE TIMES

THE TIMES | Thursday April 16 2020

Lawyer of the week Bozena Michalowska Howells

Bozena Michalowska Howells, head of product safety and consumer law at Leigh Day, acted as joint lead solicitor with a counterpart at the firm Slater & Gordon in a group claim for more than 90,000 motorists. The judge ruled that Volkswagen, the car maker, used a "defeat device" on some of its diesel cars to cheat

What were the main issues in this case? Volkswagen vociferously denied that they installed an illegal defeat device. This was therefore a trial of

emissions tests.

preliminary

issues: was the German regulator's decision binding on the High Court? And did the software meet the legal definition of a prohibited defeat device? The answer to both was a resounding "yes".

What is the best decision you have taken as a lawyer? To take on the case of UK-based Poles who were used by German companies as forced and slave labour during the Second World War

> Who has inspired you in life? My father, a Polish soldier, who arrived penniless in

England in 1947. He had an incredible work ethic, but he also stayed true to his roots.

What is the oddest thing that has happened to you in the law? I was working on an asbestos case in Swaziland late into the night when a snake fell from the rafters in the rented house. I removed it, but the next day it reappeared while I was on the phone to my husband. He worked out it was a black mamba, just before it moved quickly across the room.

What is the best advice you have received? Try to have a good relationship with your opponent, but don't allow yourself to be lulled into a false sense of security.

Which three qualities should a lawyer have? Group actions need teamwork, so straight-talking charm, camaraderie and honour.

What law would you enact? One requiring UK regulators to be proactive. Those injured as a result of taking drugs — for example, during pregnancy — should not have to campaign for years to get better warnings on pharmaceuticals.

How would you like to be remembered? As someone who made a positive difference to people's lives.

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