

UK court OKs legal claim to be served via Facebook

February 21 2012, By RAPHAEL SATTER , Associated Press

(AP) -- Status update: You're sued. Legal authorities said Tuesday that a High Court judge in England has approved the use of Facebook to serve legal claims.

Lawyers in a commercial dispute were last week granted permission to serve a suit against a defendant via the popular social networking site.

Justice Nigel Teare permitted the unconventional method of service during a pretrial hearing into a case which pits two investment managers against a brokerage firm they accuse of overcharging them.

A former trader and an ex-broker, Fabio De Biase and Anjam Ahmad, are also alleged to have been in on the scam.

Jenni Jenkins, who represents Ahmad, said lawyers in the case had been trying to track De Biase in order to serve him with legal documents. She said that a copy of the suit was left at his last known address, but that it wasn't clear whether he was still living there.

The lawyers didn't have his email address, so they applied for permission to send him the claim through Facebook.

Jenkins, an associate with London-based law firm Memery Crystal, said the lawyers were confident that de Biase's account was still active.

"The counsel told the judge that someone from the firm had been

monitoring the account and they'd seen that he's recently added two new friends, which made the judge chuckle," she said.

De Biase was given extra time to respond to the claim "to allow for the possibility that he wasn't accessing his account regularly," she added.

Ordinarily, British legal claims are served in hard copy - either in person, by [mail](#), or by fax - although unconventional means are occasionally employed if the people involved are hard to pin down.

In December, a British judge made headlines for filing an injunction against London-based protesters from the Occupy movement via text message.

The Judicial Office for England and Wales confirmed Tuesday that Teare had allowed [lawyers](#) to serve their claim through Facebook. A spokeswoman, speaking on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to give her name, said it was the first time anyone had been served via the site "as far as we're aware."

[Facebook](#) did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

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