

Opening of the Legal Year 2019: Robert Buckland QC speech

Having attended many of these occasions, I am keenly aware of the imperative of being brief.

With that in mind and in the spirit of Mark Twain's observation that 'a good lawyer knows the law; but a clever one takes the judge to lunch', I don't intend to keep you too long from yours.

These are challenging and highly-charged times, but today allows for a brief pause for reflection on the year just past and a look ahead to the coming year.

As ever, you have discharged your duties with great diligence and dignity. The individual cases over which you preside at all levels are invariably complex and contentious in their own right and require immense intellect, impartiality and integrity.

I am in no doubt that the judiciary and all those who work in and support our legal sector lead the world in demonstrating those qualities.

Judges must be able to act without fear or favour in considering, as you rightly do, questions of law. I want to reaffirm my commitment to you, as Lord Chancellor, to defend your independence and uphold the rule of law.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to, and recognise the work of judges across the jurisdictions of the United Kingdom, in Scotland and Northern Ireland and here in England and Wales. Collectively, they are a huge asset to this country as a whole.

Finally, in reflecting on the legal year, I'd like to thank Sir Brian Leveson who retired as President of the Queen's Bench Division in July this year and welcome Dame Victoria Sharp.

And as we mark the 10th anniversary of the Supreme Court this year, I want to thank Lady Hale, who is retiring as President in January, for her incisive and inspiring leadership and for her promotion of diversity. I look forward to welcoming Lord Reed in the new year.

With that, thank you all again, and please enjoy the lunch.