

Speech: Queen's Counsel appointments ceremony: Lord Chancellor speech

It is a pleasure to be here today to preside over the formal appointment of those barristers and solicitors who have been elevated to the rank of Queen's Counsel, and those being appointed as Honorary Queen's Counsel.

These ancient surroundings in Westminster Hall – with their connection to the Crown and the beginnings of our legal system – remind us of the journey we as a nation have been on in the pursuit of justice.

And today is about your journeys – journeys to the very pinnacle of your profession. I congratulate you all for the commitment and dedication that has led you here, to be publicly recognised by the Crown and by your peers for your hard-earned professional achievements.

I know that this will also be a proud day for spouses, partners, parents, children, friends and wider family, who I hope will enjoy the ceremony and I know will recognise the importance of this day for you.

Sought after for centuries, the title of Queen's Counsel is a mark of excellence, recognised not just in this country but around the world. It marks out our legal professionals here in England and Wales as elites within a global market. In doing so, it plays an important role in supporting the attractiveness of English and Welsh legal services to an international audience.

It recognises the depth of expertise and eminence you have reached in your particular field of law. And it is a mark of distinction in the art of advocacy, in developing and advancing a client's case and getting the best outcome for them.

But it also marks you out as the leaders of your profession and in doing so it places you alongside a distinguished group of individuals both now and through history.

Individuals like Rose Heilbron and Helena Normanton, who were the first two women to be appointed 70 years ago. I recall them today as this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, which made it possible for women to qualify as solicitors and barristers for the first time.

Rose Heilbron and Helena Normanton and others like them inspired a generation of women to follow in their footsteps. Women like Baroness Hale leading the Supreme Court. Women who now continue that journey and inspire a new generation of legal professionals.

And it is so crucial that we continue to inspire a new and diverse field of candidates into the law. Because our legal profession serves the public better and inspires confidence in the law when it reflects the diverse

society it serves.

Aspiring lawyers must have true equality of opportunity when entering and progressing in the profession. The most talented lawyers must be able to aspire to and obtain the rank of Queen's Counsel, regardless of their gender, background or disability.

As the leaders of your profession, you are role models for all aspiring lawyers. I know how seriously and thoughtfully you take this responsibility.

This year there are 108 awards of silk. Her Majesty the Queen makes the appointments on the advice of the Lord Chancellor. My predecessors and I would not be able to undertake this role without the valuable advice of an independent selection panel. I am incredibly grateful for the work Sir Alex Allan has done in chairing the panel – and to all its distinguished members, including:

- Wanda Goldwag
- Tony King
- Rachel Langdale QC
- Edward Nally
- Penelope Reed QC
- Maggie Semple OBE
- Monisha Shah
- Dame Janet Smith
- Ranjit Sondhi CBE

The panel continues to provide advice of the highest quality and, in doing so, runs a transparent and open competition – one which ensures that we can have confidence that appointments are made fairly and justly on merit.

In addition to those who have been awarded silk, there are also seven awards for Queen's Counsel, *honoris causa*. I would like to thank the highly qualified selection panel, chaired by Mark Sweeney, a Director General at the Ministry of Justice and consisting of:

- Christina Blacklaws
- Chantal-Aimee Doerries QC
- Millicent Grant
- Lady Justice King
- Professor Rebecca Probert
- Professor Richard Taylor
- Amelia Wright

This award is recognition for those who have made a major contribution to the law of England and Wales outside of practice in the courts and I would like to say a few words about each of those who are receiving the title of Honorary Queen's Counsel today.

Professor Mads Andenæs is Professor of Law at the University of Oslo and Research Fellow at the University of Oxford and University of London. He is considered a pre-eminent academic and has been recommended for his work in

the fields of comparative and international law, and European and domestic private and regulatory law.

Professor Sue Arrowsmith is the author of the principal treatise used by practitioners and academics in the field of public procurement law. For more than 20 years she has organised a major international conference on procurement at the University of Nottingham bringing together policy makers, practitioners and academics.

Professor Richard Fentiman is Professor of Private International Law at the University of Cambridge where he was formerly Chair of the Faculty of Law. He is acknowledged internationally as a leading scholar in his field and is recognised especially as an expert on the law and practice of international commercial litigation.

Jonathan Jones is the Treasury Solicitor and Permanent Secretary of the Government Legal Department. He has brought together all Government legal teams to establish a unique legal shared service for the Government Legal Department. He has played a critical personal role in providing legal advice to the Government under the exceptional current circumstances.

Professor Charles Mitchell is one of the outstanding and most respected academic authorities on the law of unjust enrichment and the law of trusts. He has written books on subrogation; on contribution and reimbursement; on unjust enrichment; and on trusts.

Professor Thomas Glyn Watkin is an academic who has also served the Welsh Assembly Government as its first principal Legislative Draftsman. He was involved centrally in establishing and building the legislative drafting capacity of the Welsh Government – in both English and Welsh – in the initial years of primary legislative devolution for Wales.

Let me once again take the opportunity to congratulate each of you warmly and thank you for your individual contributions to the law across such a diverse range of disciplines and fields.

The role of Queen's Counsel is not only a mark of quality recognised around the world, it also promotes high standards of advocacy in the legal profession.

Everyone here today, and all those who have supported your appointment, have shown confidence and belief in you. That's a confidence and belief that I share entirely.

And as someone who once added two – admittedly different – letters to the end of their name, let me just say in closing that it is a recognition but it is also a responsibility. As leaders in the law, I know it is one that you take solemnly and seriously.

Congratulations to all of you on being appointed Queen's Counsel and I wish you the very best for the future.