

# Speech: Lord Chancellor swearing-in speech: David Lidington

Mr Attorney, I'd like to thank the Lord Chief Justice for his kind words and warm welcome. I too look forward to working with the Lord Chief Justice and the other eminent members of the bench.

It's an enormous privilege and a great honour to have been sworn in as Lord Chancellor and to have received the Great Seal of the Realm, an ancient symbol of this office that has 900 years of history behind it.

The freedoms and protections that we all enjoy are of course built on a principle that is much more important than the seals and the symbols of office – the rule of law itself.

That principle, together with the independence of the judiciary, form the very bedrock of a free and democratic society.

They safeguard us against tyranny and dictatorship.

They allow us to live in a society where no individual and no government is above the law, a society where everyone can expect equality before the law and the right to a fair trial, a society where executive power is balanced by both a strong judiciary that acts without fear or favour and a scrutinising legislature – something that I have seen in action over 25 years as a member of Parliament and in the last 12 months as Leader of the House of Commons.

Three branches of the state, each separate, but each having a mutual respect for the others.

I know from my previous ministerial experience how important the strength of those structures and the rule of law are.

As Europe Minister, one of my key priorities was to promote the protection of human rights and help uphold the rule of law in countries across Europe, especially perhaps in those European nations that had seen those traditions crushed.

I've seen the impact on people's lives when they falter.

And I'm proud of our work to support countries all over the world, for example in Eastern Europe, nations like Albania and Bulgaria, where the United Kingdom is helping them build the strong justice and legal systems they need for their democracies to deepen and flourish.

And I have seen that you, as senior judges, have played – and continue to play – a vital role in that noble work, extending your expertise, through the Judicial College and other organisations like the Slynn Foundation, to assist countries with judicial training and court reform.

And for that, thank you.

For me, this overseas perspective serves as a sharp reminder of just how precious those principles are here at home – for protecting our freedoms, our democracy, and our way of life – a way of life, which we have seen in the dreadful news from north London today, remains under threat.

So I am determined I will be resolute and unflinching as Lord Chancellor in upholding the rule of law and defending the independence of the judiciary.

The very reason countries look to us for support is because the UK is seen as the home of high quality justice and legal services.

People come here from around the world to have their legal disputes resolved because they know that they will get a fair and independent hearing.

And for this, we have much to thank the exceptional men and women that make up our judiciary.

Your intellect, your sharp legal minds, your wealth of knowledge, together with your dedication, personal integrity and commitment ensure we have a judiciary that is fair, free from improper influence, and truly independent.

Now, wearing these robes today for the first time, it is impossible not to feel the history.

But I see, too, how important it is to look beyond the pageantry to how, robed or not, bewigged or bare-headed, judges embody the rule of law.

You all carry the weight – often the lonely weight – of this most vital duty, both in the judgments you make in individual cases, and in the development of the common law itself – a jurisprudence that is world-renowned.

For that – and for the strength and health which this has brought to our country and our society – I want to thank you all sincerely.

But we should never be complacent about the need to build on and protect our successes, nor be too shy to embrace reform where that is needed.

And looking ahead as we leave the European Union, it will be a priority for me to promote our excellent legal services both at home and as a major UK export, to maintain London as a competitive hub and ensure people continue to see English law as the law of choice.

I also want to work together to make sure the administration of justice is swifter and puts the citizen at the centre of what we do by harnessing all the new opportunities which the technologies of our digital age have to offer.

And I know much hard work has already been done to modernise the courts and tribunals system for the 21st century, and how the judiciary has led that endeavour, and I look forward to continuing that important work with you.

The principles of justice that I swear to protect and promote in my Oath as Lord Chancellor are timeless.

Our approach to the way we protect and administer those principles of justice is in many cases modern.

And together, we can not only celebrate and preserve our proud history, but work to ensure that justice continues to be fairly administered and robustly defended for the next 900 years.

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## [News story: Communities Secretary statement: safety checks following the Grenfell Tower fire](#)

The Grenfell Tower police-led investigation is underway, but it will be some time before it is fully understood how the fire started or why it took hold in the way it did.

In the meantime there is significant anxiety amongst residents about whether their own blocks are safe.

While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to be determined, we have concluded that there are additional tests that can be undertaken with regard to the cladding.

We are therefore [asking local authorities and other registered providers of social housing](#) to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM).

More details on how to identify this cladding are being supplied in a technical note, and the Homes and Communities Agency can offer expert support in surveying your properties if necessary.

It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We have asked local authorities and all providers of social housing to identify whether any buildings in their area contain cladding made of aluminium composite material (ACM) by the end of today (Monday 19 June).

We are putting in place a rigorous, government funded testing

process for any ACM cladding identified.

Housing Minister Alok Sharma this morning met representatives from across the housing sector including the Home Builders Federation, Local Government Association and the National Housing Federation. They all expressed their support for this work and gave a commitment that they would progress this with all possible haste.

It is clear that a considerable amount of work has already been undertaken. Councils are working closely with fire and rescue services to ensure that the appropriate safety and response measures are in place and talking to their tenants to hear their concerns.

Any landlord who is concerned can contact the department at [housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk) for further advice about cladding materials – this is a dedicated contact point which has been set up to provide technical support and reassurance.

Our priority is to reassure people that they are safe in their homes – and that is exactly what we are doing.

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## **[News story: Minister Burt statement on Jerusalem attack](#)**

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, condemns the attack in Jerusalem on Friday 16 June.

Minister Burt said:

I strongly condemn the terrorist attack that took place on Friday in Jerusalem. My thoughts are with the victims and their families. The UK is clear there can be absolutely no justification for terrorism in any circumstances.

### **Further information**

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# Speech: PM press conference with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar: 19 June 2017

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Leo Varadkar to Downing Street today for the first time and offer my congratulations on his appointment as Taoiseach and leader of Fine Gael.

The unique relationship shared between the United Kingdom and Ireland is one of friendship, close cooperation and a deep sense of shared endeavour, bound by common values and generations of family links between our people.

The Taoiseach has said he believes in an Ireland where every person has an opportunity to succeed and share in prosperity. And I share a similar belief that the United Kingdom should be a place where everyone should have the chance to live a secure and happy life – a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

We also spoke about the unimaginable tragedy which struck Grenfell Tower last week. The government will continue to do absolutely everything possible to help all of those affected through the difficult days, weeks, months and years ahead.

We spoke too about the appalling attack on Londoners in Finsbury in the early hours of this morning. As I said earlier, this was an attack that once again targeted the ordinary and the innocent going about their daily lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the man who died and those who were injured.

The Taoiseach expressed his deepest sympathies for those affected by these horrific events and we both agreed that this kind of hatred and evil that leads to terrorism would never prevail.

Last week, the Taoiseach and I spoke and we agreed on the crucial need for the parties in Northern Ireland to form a fully functioning Executive by the 29 June deadline and how we would continue to engage closely on this important issue and reaffirmed that today.

We have both met the two main parties to make clear that the UK and Ireland would do everything we can to work with them and the importance of reaching an agreement by 29 June.

It is my firm belief that with good will on both sides a resolution can be reached which builds on the progress made in the last round of discussions.

And my government remains absolutely committed to a successful outcome from these talks and we remain steadfast in our support for the Belfast Agreement and its successors.

As the United Kingdom embarks on leaving the European Union, I fully respect that Ireland will remain an EU member state and that's why it is more

important than ever that the relationship between our countries continues to go from strength to strength.

We are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe – and we want to remain committed partners and allies of Ireland and all our friends across the continent.

Trade between our countries is worth over £43 billion a year and supports 400,000 jobs. And there are also complex supply chains that benefit both our countries. And as I've said before, no one wants to see this diminished.

I am personally committed to ensuring a practical solution that recognises the unique economic, social, cultural and political context of the land border with Ireland – which so many people pass through everyday and it remains our priority to work closely with the Irish government to ensure a frictionless and seamless border as possible.

And I made this clear in my letter to Donald Tusk triggering Article 50 and that we want to maintain the Common Travel Area between us to make sure the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not harm the Republic of Ireland.

We also want the reciprocal rights that our citizens enjoy in both countries to continue, including the rights guaranteed under the Belfast Agreement.

And both we and the EU have made clear that we want to resolve this as a matter of priority and I am pleased that as negotiations begin in Brussels today we can start working in earnest together on joint solutions.

And it is with this shared sense of purpose that I believe our 2 countries can build even deeper ties and our unique relationship will become even closer and stronger.

The Taoiseach and I have had constructive discussions today. I look forward to working with him and to continuing the close relationship that our 2 countries have enjoyed for many more generations to come.

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## **News story: New ministerial appointment June 2017: Leader of the House of Commons**

The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP has been appointed Lord President of the Privy Council and Leader of the House of Commons.

Andrea Leadsom said:

"I am delighted to have been appointed as Lord President and Leader of the House of Commons in what is an historic period for our Parliament.

"I am optimistic about our prospects as the UK prepares to leave the European Union and plan to work diligently to ensure the Government can successfully bring in its new legislative programme.

"It is incumbent on all parliamentarians that we do so in a spirit of national unity – openly discussing our disagreements while working hard to resolve our differences in the best interests of the country. I look forward to working across party lines on this basis.

"As we anticipate the return of significant powers from the European Union to the Palace of Westminster, we will show the world why our democracy is so valuable and so important in helping provide fairness and opportunity for everyone."

Also confirmed is the reappointment of Michael Ellis MP as Deputy Leader of the House of Commons.

Michael Ellis said:

"I am very pleased to return as Deputy Leader, a role I have greatly enjoyed and continue to relish.

"The Government is always committed to listening carefully to Parliament's views and we will continue to do just that in the years ahead."