

VICE PRESIDENT SPEAKING NOTES FOR VALEDICTORIAN ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT OF THE QUEEN'S BENCH

Date: 21 June, 09.15

Location: Court 4, Royal Courts of Justice

Audience: Senior members of the judiciary and the legal profession

1. INTRODUCTION

My Lords, ladies and gentlemen.

Sir Brian, it is a real honour, privilege and personal pleasure for me, as President-Elect of the Law Society of England and Wales, to be here this morning to congratulate you on behalf of the Society for the exceptional contribution you have made to the legal profession and our legal system throughout your distinguished career.

I met Brian for the first time many years ago, when dinosaurs walked the earth, and he only recently secured the conviction of Rose West in a case that had obviously affected him quite deeply.

I was attending a residential advocacy course for solicitors. Brian had generously and probably heretically given up his weekend to act as judge in various mock settings.

We were at all times impressed by his much needed patience, his kindness and brains but also his tongue in cheek humour, raised eyebrows and sense of fun.

During the centuries that have intervened I have watched Brian show quite exceptional versatility.

2. CRIMINAL JUSTICE

It was fitting that you chose to focus your valedictory speech to University College London last week on “*criminal trials: the human experience.*”

Throughout your legal and judicial career you have focused on the human impact of criminal law and the justice system. Indeed, I think many of us will empathise with your declaration that the opportunity to work with and help so many people has been the “*real privilege of my professional life*”.

You have taken a refreshing approach to the law by recognising the significant impact the justice system has on those who journey through it. Your belief that the criminal justice is a fundamental tenet to a working democracy has shaped your commitment to ensuring that it is fit for the future.

You understood clearly that for your review into the criminal justice system to succeed everyone with a stake in the system needed to be able to contribute to the overall result. We commend the vision you have shown and your ability to channel the passion and commitment of everyone working in the sector into

achieving an outcome that will help to secure the future of our criminal justice system and ensure justice continues to be served.

3. OPEN JUSTICE

Your commitment to open justice must also be commended. In what was arguably one of the highest profile inquiries of this century, and one that will certainly cement your place in the history books, you took the bold decision to live stream the proceedings. We must all be alive to the need for transparency – your watchword for this inquiry – and the importance of administering justice in public.

Your opening statement at the Leveson Inquiry is not only a model for all those running an inquiry of such scale but shows that your sense of humour has remained alive and well, as it commences “*Good morning. My name is Brian Leveson. Although flattered that various politicians and members of the press have elevated me to the rank of peerage, I am not Lord Leveson: my judicial rank is that of a Lord Justice of Appeal.*”

You have taken a keen interest in the sustainability of all parts of the criminal legal profession. You recognised that “*criminal solicitors are a vital cog in our delicately balanced justice eco-system.*”

Your support for our work on the average age of criminal duty solicitors has added weight to our argument that steps need to be taken to ensure there is a

healthy pipeline of solicitors available to support people during their first, unwanted, experience of the criminal justice system – at a police station.

We thank you for that.

Your long-term commitment to the profession as a whole and, your enthusiasm for drawing together – the voluntary sector, academics, CILEx, the Bar, solicitors, judges to work in the interest of clients, communities and society as a whole is admirable.

And your ambassadorial role for Young Citizens equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make a positive difference to the society in which they live means that your contribution to society will continue for many years to come.

We thank you for that.

4. ENDING

We have no doubt that this is not the last we will hear from you. No doubt Liverpool John Moores University and Young Citizens will continue to benefit from your wisdom and passion.

Overall it is quite fitting before the next chapter of Brian's life begins that I say on behalf of the solicitors profession and our clients, thank you for all that you

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have done to ensure that our criminal and civil system of justice is of the highest quality and one in which individuals and businesses can have confidence at a time when the rule of law is under such threat from so many quarters.

Thank you.