

Your Majesty, it is an honour to welcome you to the Royal Courts of Justice. And to do so on behalf of the judiciary of England and Wales, and the UK Supreme Court. It is a particular privilege to welcome you in this, Your Majesty's Coronation year.

It was once said that judges had to be lions. Lions under the throne. Our lionesses and lions today are drawn from all across the United Kingdom. Very many are volunteers who give their time to deliver justice in the Magistrates' courts. Many have expertise in specific areas outside the law, such as mental health, employment and tax, particularly those who sit in the Tribunals. And, of course, very many are lawyers. You cannot escape us, I am afraid!

Your Majesty once commented that the strength of society arose from Unity through Diversity. Society at its best weaves many threads together. It is often said that the great strength of the common law is that it too is the product of many voices, of many strands of thought. The strength of today's judiciary – and through that our commitment to the rule of law – flows from that very same diversity of background, of experience, of expertise drawn from across all of society.

Your Majesty, just over 140 years ago, we welcomed Queen Victoria to the opening of these Royal Courts of Justice. She too was brought to this room, which - so it is said - stands on the jousting grounds used by the Knights Templars. From here she looked on the serried ranks of lawyers and their clients jostling with each other while waiting for their turn before a judge. She described what she saw as being akin to a Bear Garden. The room next door – quieter now than then – is still known fondly by that name.

Queen Victoria did not, thankfully, exit stage left that day. On the contrary, in opening these courts she marked the historic relationship of the sovereign with their judges. Your Majesty, your visit today once more highlights the strength and significance of that relationship, of Your Majesty's role as the fount of justice and the judiciary's role in dispensing it without fear or favour. Thank you.