

Legal Wales Conference

6 October 2023

Opening Address

Dear Delegates, Speakers, Session Chairs and Colleagues,

Welcome to the 20th Conference of Legal Wales.

The first Legal Wales Conference took place here in Cardiff on 19 September 2003.

The initiative behind that first conference was provided by Huw Williams, my predecessor as Chair of Legal Wales, and it is Huw who rightly deserves the plaudits for the impetus and drive behind the organisation of the 2023 version. Over 20 years, Huw has been at or beside the helm, driving the conference and the Legal Wales Foundation onwards, watching his ideas flourish. He has continued doing so this year as Chair of the Organising Committee, alongside his colleagues on the committee Professor Thomas Watkin KC and David Gardner, and ably assisted by Elisabeth Jones, the Foundation Secretary, Hannah Menard, our Treasurer, and also, of course, our Conference Director, and Founder of our Media Partner, Legal News, the extraordinary Emma Waddingham. I thank them all sincerely, and Huw *primus inter pares*.

At the inaugural Conference in 2003, the keynote speaker was Lord Bingham of Cornhill. And appropriately so. It was Lord Bingham as Lord Chief Justice of England who officially reformed the title and, in doing so, became the very first Lord Chief Justice of England *and Wales*.

Now, 20 years on, we are exceptionally proud to welcome today the very first Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales, Dame Sue Carr.

The Legal Wales Foundation has been honoured in the intervening years to welcome to the Conference successive Lord Chief Justices, all of them embracing their position

as head of the judiciary here in Wales, to such an extent that Dame Carr's immediate predecessor Lord Burnett of Maldon, when speaking at last year's Conference in Llandudno, unofficially reformed the title again and addressed us simply as 'the Lord Chief Justice of Wales'.

After less than a week in the role, perhaps it is too early to expect Dame Carr to drop England so quickly, but we do sincerely hope that Dame Carr enjoys her time here in Wales, both today and in the years to come, so that the unofficial title 'Lady Chief Justice of Wales' will come to fit her as just comfortably as her full title.

Lord Bingham, our first keynote speaker, was deeply connected to Wales. From 1965 to his death in 2010, his family home was in the glorious countryside around Llyswen and Boughrood, just north of the Black Mountains in Powys. A beautiful part of Wales – a part very special to my heart in fact - and one I shall commend to our new Lady Chief Justice to visit and embrace.

Our first dinner speaker on 19 September 2003 was another lawyer of the highest esteem and with a fathomless connection to Wales, the former Secretary of State for Wales and Attorney General of England and Wales, Lord Morris of Aberavon KC. Sadly, Baron Morris passed away in June this year, as the longest-serving Privy Councillor following a total of 60 years of Parliamentary service in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, throughout dedicated to Wales. We mourn his passing and thank him for his immense contribution to legal Wales.

We are of course delighted that Her Honour Wendy Joseph KC joins us as Guest Speaker at the 2023 dinner. Her Honour Judge Joseph returns today to her hometown, Cardiff, after 10 years as a judge trying the most serious criminal cases at the Central Criminal Court – the Old Bailey. Judge Joseph is the author of the Sunday Times bestseller, "Unlawful Killings: Life, Love and Murder Trials at the Old Bailey". Described in the Times review as 'a gripping account of the law at work which reads like a cliffhanger', if you are one of the few who hasn't read it, copies are on sale

throughout the day and the evening on the wonderful Griffin Books stall. Please speak to Mel on the stall – she will even get you a signed copy! Be sure not to miss Her Honour Wendy Joseph’s talk at the dinner later this evening.

The inaugural Conference programme in 2003 covered a diverse range of topics including freedom of information, the survival of legal practice, and developments in the use of the Welsh language in the legal and administrative process.

Our 2023 programme is broader again and spans the family courts, public law, legal services, criminal justice, law reform, the Welsh Tribunals, alternative dispute resolution, international commercial law and international criminal law.

The primary flavour of our Conference is, and always will be of course, Welsh - but the strong, multi-jurisdictional undercurrent to this year’s Conference is boosted by the presence of not just one but two Lady Chief Justices. We extend to Dame Siobhan Keegan the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, the warmest of welcomes to our capital city.

We are also delighted to be joined later in the day by Her Honour Judge Joanna Korner, our British Judge at the International Criminal Court, in the Hague, Netherlands. Another fine capital city like Cardiff, the Hague is a city which both Dame Carr, from her time as Complaints Commissioner at the International Criminal Court, and Dame Keegan, from her time as member of the International Hague Network of Judges, will be familiar with. Like the Hague, we hope that Dame Carr, Dame Keegan and Her Honour Judge Korner come to view Cardiff just like a second home.

Of course our stellar line-up today runs from start to finish without interruption or pause.

I would like at the outset to express my deep thanks to each of the judicial Chairs and Speakers, who have given their time today to ensure the success of this Conference: Lord Lloyd Jones JSC, Mrs Justice Morgan, Mr Justice Francis, the Recorder of Cardiff,

Her Honour Judge Tracey Lloyd-Clarke, Sir Nicholas Green, Sir Gary Hickinbottom, Mrs Justice Jefford and, the very newly appointed, His Honour Judge Christopher Grout to whom we convey our warmest congratulations.

Similarly, I pass my thanks on to those colleagues from academia, Professor Emyr Lewis, Professor John Harrington, Dr Ruth Hussey, Dr Robert Jones, Professor Richard Wyn Jones, Dr Hayley Roberts and Dr Sarah Nason, and colleagues from the professions, Gareth Gwyndaf Jones, Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones, Hephzibah Egede, Rhodri Williams KC, Richard Orpin, Liz Withers, Jason Chapman, Nicola Williams, Alice Hart, Laura Hughes, Nicholas Paines KC, Rhys Taylor, Elwen Evans KC and, of course, the Foundation's dear friend, former Treasurer and Conference Director, Keith Bush KC.

All chairs and speakers have kindly and generously donated their time to make today a great success.

I am grateful too for our exhibitors and their support:

Watkins & Gunn,

Wales Restorative Action Partnership,

University of Wales Trinity St David's,

The Pro-Bono Committee for Wales, and

Griffin Books.

I give special praise and thanks to our Lunch Sponsor, 11 KBW chambers; and to our Conference Dinner Sponsor, 30 Park Place chambers. Your support is invaluable to us and particularly gratifying to consume.

An extra special mention goes to our Headline Sponsors, Browne Jacobson. Without your financial support, and the support of each of our contributors, exhibitors and sponsors, the Conference simply would not take place.

I urge everyone here to take the time to read carefully through our digital delegate packs, kindly sponsored by our final sponsor TSR Legal Recruitment. You should see a QR code on each table in front of you, at the registration desk and on the posters around the venue. Scan the QR code with your phone and you will be taken to the digital delegate pack where you will find the full programme, including importantly the details and locations of all breakout sessions, speaker biographies, speaker notes where we have them, and insights from our sponsors information.

You will also find an extra special document in the delegate pack – an information sheet on the Lord Edmund-Davies Legal Education Trust & Legal Wales Access to Law Summer Scheme, a week-long residential scheme in Cardiff for aspiring sixth-formers (those in Year 12) across Wales who do not otherwise enjoy the advantage of existing connections to the legal profession. The Scheme was originally launched in London in 2014 by LEDLET, but since July 2020, the Legal Wales Foundation has run a parallel programme in Cardiff, effectively doubling the number of pupils that can benefit from the scheme each year. Like the Conference, the Summer Scheme depends entirely upon the support of the legal community in Wales (judicial, professional and academic). In 2023, work placements were generously provided by Acuity Law, Apex Chambers, Blake Morgan LLP, Capital Law, Civitas Chambers, Eversheds Sutherland, Geldards LLP, Lewis Silkin LLP, Martyn Prowel Gartside, Senedd Cymru Legal Service, Watkins & Gunn, 9 Park Place and 30 Park Place. Cardiff University and the University of South Wales kindly provided venues and legal colleagues from BBC Cymru Wales provided the students with a fascinating tour. Employment Judge Claire Sharp presided over a mooted half-day and the Recorder of Cardiff and His Honour Judge Paul Hobson, together with court and CPS staff, hosted a visit of the students to Cardiff Crown Court, which culminated in a live-streamed talk and Q&A by Lord Lloyd-Jones, directly from the Supreme Court in Parliament Square.

Without exception, the feedback from those who gave their time to support the scheme commented on the joy and pleasure it brought them to work with the students and I

urge anyone who might be able to offer some support in kind, whether by offering work placements or talks or hosting social events, to contact Elisabeth Jones, our Secretary and the co-ordinator of the Summer Scheme Cardiff programme. You will not regret it.

The aim of the Scheme, which looks positively at applications from pupils from economically disadvantaged areas, or who have a disability, or who face other challenges in life is to widen opportunity. It is completely free of charge to the students, including travel and accommodation. To that end, any profit we make from the Conference and Dinner today will go to support the 2024 Scheme – but alone that will not be enough.

In 2022 and 2023, the Summer Scheme very kindly received grant funding from the Sion Mullane Foundation, which works with schools and organisations in Wales to provide support for initiatives that promote the education and social mobility of young people. In 2023, we also received a grant from the Thomas Howell Education Fund for North Wales, a charity which strives to increase student inclusiveness across primary, secondary and further education in North Wales, particularly in areas of high deprivation. We are immensely grateful to both charities. But we need to raise additional funding, in the order of £1000-2000 per year. Please take a moment to consider if you or your organisation can help us raise funds for the Summer Scheme in 2024.

Some of our volunteers today include former Summer Scheme students, acting under the stewardship of two more established volunteers: Richard Jones, the Engagement and Communications Executive at the Law Society Wales Office, and Philip Stallard, of the Training and Knowledge Management Team at the Welsh Government. Their team of volunteers buzzing around the Conference today is completed by a number of student volunteers from our fine universities. Please do take the time to chat with all our young helpers and make our collective appreciation of them clear. I am sure

that everyone will share this sentiment – in a room undoubtedly full of very important people, they are the most important.

The true measure of success for this year's Conference is the inspiration that those young people will take with them at the end of today, eager to follow in your collective footsteps, in any of the wonderful and colourful directions you have trod, while always retaining your passion and dedication both to the law and to Wales.

It falls instead to me to undertake the less inspiring task of asking everyone to put their mobile phones and smart devices on silent. Also, if you hear the fire alarm at any point today please follow the exit signs to safely leave the building. There is no fire alarm testing scheduled for today.

It is a sign of how fortunate we are that when we hear a siren we tend to assume that it is only a drill, such that it has become conventional at events like this to give notice whether an alarm test is scheduled.

Having personally delivered humanitarian supplies to Ukraine last year, our first keynote speaker has experienced first-hand what it was like to hear air raid sirens.

'The one memory I cannot get out of my head', he has written, 'is of the air raid warning sirens followed by public address safety instructions. Lviv has been hit by cruise missiles on a number of occasions yet the reaction of the population is just one of normality. No-one ran or changed direction; there was no panic. One man just held up his arm with a V for Victory sign and everyone else carried on with what they were doing; but they all know it is very different in the east where Ukrainian forces have begun a counter offensive'.

A year later, that counter offensive is still searching for a clear breakthrough. While Russian airstrikes, like the terrible attack on the village of Hroza yesterday, continue to take the lives of civilians.

Conference, with some further reflections perhaps on developments in Ukraine where his family hails from, and also no doubt some commentary on the important legal and constitutional developments currently on the agenda of the Welsh Government and the wider legal sector here, please give a warm welcome to the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, Mick Antoniw MS.