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Press Notice

HM The Queen officially opens The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

Her Majesty The Queen today officially opened The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom at an event attended by senior judges from around the world, politicians and others from the UK.

Located on Parliament Square, the building which is now home to the new Supreme Court has been painstakingly restored through a Ministry of Justice managed project – with many of the previously obscured original features of the Middlesex Guildhall brought back to light.

The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh were taken on a tour of the building by The Rt Hon Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, the Court's President, The Right Hon Lord Hope of Craighead, Deputy President and Jenny Rowe, its Chief Executive.

Lord Phillips said: "It was a very great honour that Her Majesty performed the official opening and that it was attended by so many distinguished guests. The creation of a Supreme Court for the United Kingdom is undoubtedly a major constitutional landmark. It unequivocally separates the senior judiciary from the legislature and the executive, but also brings other benefits.

"The Court's new facilities are far improved for Justices, lawyers, other court users and the public. Justice at the highest level should be transparent and we now have facilities which are truly accessible and create opportunities for people to gain a better understanding of our work and the UK legal systems in general."

Greeted with a fanfare by The State Trumpeters of The Band of The Blues and Royals, The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh met staff, contractors and artists who had contributed to the project. In the Court's new exhibition area they saw schoolchildren from William Edward's School and Sports College, Grays, Essex, using interactive displays that explain the UK's legal systems and the role of the Court's Justices. A legal debate or 'moot' was also staged in Court One by students from Strode's College, Egham, Surrey.

Lord Phillips, The Prime Minister The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP and Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State, The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP addressed guests who included many senior members of overseas judiciary. Judges from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Europe, India and Canada were among those who attended. There were also dignitaries from the Commonwealth and

Crown Dependencies, from the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and Gibraltar, as well as Caribbean islands.

Sir Andrew Motion, former poet laureate, read his poem ‘Lines for the Supreme Court’, commissioned by the Justices of the Supreme Court to mark its establishment. The poem has been engraved onto stone benches outside the front entrance of The Supreme Court building. Prayers were led by His Grace, The Archbishop of Canterbury after Her Majesty unveiled a commemorative bronze sculpture.

Jenny Rowe, Chief Executive of The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, said: “I am extremely honoured that Her Majesty was able to undertake the official opening of the Court.

“The Court will educate as well as adjudicate and one of our fundamental aims is to be as transparent as possible in its judgments and proceedings. These are routinely filmed and will be made available to broadcasters, which is a first for the UK. In the coming months we will be developing our education and outreach work – so there are exciting times ahead.”

Ends

Notes to editors

- Established through the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, the Supreme Court will hear civil appeal cases from England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, as well as criminal appeal cases from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It takes over the devolution jurisdiction of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC). The JCPC continues to be the final court of appeal for certain Commonwealth countries and other jurisdictions, such as Crown Dependencies.
- The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom has replaced the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords.
- The JCPC now sits in the same building as the Supreme Court, having moved from its previous accommodation at 9 Downing Street.
- Judges who attended the Official Opening included:

Honorable John G. Roberts, Jr, Chief Justice of the United States
Honorable Antonin Scalia, Associate Justice of The Supreme Court of the United States
Honorable Stephen Breyer, Associate Justice of The Supreme Court of the United States
The Rt Hon Dame Sian Elias, Chief Justice of The Supreme Court of New Zealand
The Rt Hon Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of The Supreme Court of Canada
The Honourable Justice Susan Kiefel, High Court of Australia
Honourable Mr Justice K G Balakrishnan, Chief Justice of The Supreme Court of India
Chief Justice Pius Langa, Constitutional Court, South Africa
The Hon Chief Justice Andrew Li, High Court, Hong Kong
Dorit Beinisch, President of The Supreme Court of Israel
The Rt Hon Dame Joan Sawyer, President of The Court of Appeal of the Bahamas
Hon Chief Justice Richard W Ground OBE, The Court of Appeal of Bermuda
Hon Chief Justice Anthony Smellie QC, The Court of Appeal of the Cayman Islands
Hon Chief Justice Lord Christopher Gardner QC, Falkland Islands and British Indian Ocean Territory
Hon Chief Justice (Acting) Anthony Dudley, The Supreme Court of Gibraltar
Hon Justice Frederick Bruce-Lyle, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court
Hon Justice Michael Kerruish QC, High Court of Justice of the Isle of Man
Hon Judge Charles Blackie, Pitcairn Islands
Hon Chief Justice Ivor Archie, Trinidad and Tobago
Hon Justice Richard Williams, Turks and Caicos Islands

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

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Madame Pauliine Koskelo, President of The Supreme Court of Finland
Monsieur Vincent Lamandat, Chief Justice of The Supreme Court of France
Prof. Dr Klaus Tolkdorf, President of The Supreme Court of Germany
The Hon Mr Justice John Morgan, Chief Justice of The Supreme Court of Ireland
Monsieur Vincenzo Carbone, First President of The Supreme Court of Italy
Prof. Dr hab Lech Gardocki, First President of The Supreme Court of Poland
Monsieur Franc Testen, President of The Supreme Court of Slovenia
Vassilios Skouris, President of The European Court of Justice
Sir Nicolas Bratza, Vice President of The European Court of Human Rights
Chief Justice Johan Munck, Supreme Court of Sweden

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