



Reference number: 08/2011

Date: 4 August 2011

Press Notice

Opening the doors on Supreme Courts around the world

Summer visitors to one of central London's legal landmarks can now look forward to a virtual world tour as part of their trip, with the opening of a free temporary exhibition profiling top courts around the globe.

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, on Parliament Square, will this week unveil a series of exhibition panels featuring brief descriptions of nine other Supreme Courts. The courts reflect a diverse geography – from the United States and France to South Africa and New Zealand – as well as a range of legal frameworks, including both common law and civil law systems. For each court, basic information about its role and jurisdiction is accompanied by recent photographs.

“With London firmly in the spotlight following the Royal Wedding and in the run-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, we felt our international visitors would appreciate an exhibition that related their own top courts with that of the United Kingdom,” says Jenny Rowe, Chief Executive of the Supreme Court.

“We hope the panels will complement our existing permanent exhibition material on the creation and function of the Court, and encourage our growing number of visitors to reflect on the critical role that well-run courts have as part of any civilised society,” she adds.

During August and September 2010, the Supreme Court building welcomed more than 16,000 visitors. Based on increased visitor figures to the building during 2011 so far, numbers are expected to reach 23,000 over the next two months. To help meet this increased demand, the Court has recently begun offering guided tours. For a small charge, visitors are shown around the building by a trained member of staff on days when there are no court sittings.

The Court, housed in the former Middlesex Guildhall opened in 1913, is taking part in the Open House London weekend (17 and 18 September) for the second year running. Booking for this popular free event will open shortly.

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

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In addition, the Court is holding its own special open days on **Friday 26 August, Tuesday 30 August, Friday 16 September** and **Monday 19 September**, when areas of the building usually only accessible to staff and lawyers will be open for visitors to see. These rooms contain artwork held in the Middlesex Guildhall Art Collection, depicting a range of figures who made significant contributions to the law and administration in the historic county of Middlesex.

The Court is also laying on creative activities for younger visitors. On the open days, children can take part in a quiz trail around the building, try their hand at colouring in the Court's floral emblem or design new robes for the Supreme Court Justices.

The Court is open on weekdays from 9.30am to 4.30pm, and entrance is free. Guided tours are available on selected days, priced £5 for adults and £3.50 for concessions, with advance booking necessary. No booking is necessary for the special open days.

Ends

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