



The Bar Council

Heidi Stonecliffe KC, Vice Chair of the Bar

Speech for the swearing in of the new President of the Kings Bench Division

Lord Justice Warby

5 October 2026

On behalf of the Bar of England and Wales, may I welcome Lord Justice Warby as President of the King's Bench Division. Ordinarily this would fall to the Chair of the Bar, Kirsty Brimelow KC, but she sends her apologies as she is abroad on Bar Council business. As Vice Chair, it is therefore my great privilege to speak on behalf of the profession and to congratulate Lord Justice Warby on his appointment.

This is one of the great offices of our legal system, leading the largest division of the High Court and occupying a place at the heart of the administration of justice. It is therefore fitting that this office should be held by someone whose career has been marked by exceptional achievement, public service, and unwavering dedication to the rule of law.

The Bar has long taken pride in those who have combined excellence in advocacy with a commitment to judicial leadership. Lord Justice Warby stands firmly in that tradition. His appointment is not only recognition of a remarkable career; it is an affirmation of the values of intellect, independence and integrity that lie at the heart of our profession.

Throughout his years in practice, His Lordship established himself as one of the country's leading advocates in media, privacy, defamation and sports law. Yet he was not merely practising in these fields; he was helping to shape their development.

Every lawyer hopes to master their area of practice. Only a very few leave a lasting mark on the law itself. Lord Justice Warby belongs firmly in that latter category.

It has been said that "Privacy law is one of the defining legal challenges of the digital age." Few judges have done more to meet that challenge than His Lordship. Through his judgments and his leadership of the Media and Communications List in its formative years, he helped develop the principles by which English law balances competing rights and interests in a world transformed by technology.

He has addressed some of the most difficult questions of modern law. How should freedom of expression be balanced with personal privacy? How should reputation be protected while preserving robust public debate? How should long-established legal principles adapt to search engines, social media and global communication? These are questions that have defined a new era, Lord Justice Warby has played a central role in answering them.

While Lord Justice Warby was presiding over many of the leading cases concerning privacy, data protection and the internet, many of us were making our own contribution to digital progress by asking younger colleagues how to share our screen on a video call. It was reassuring that, as technology became more complex, the law governing it was in the hands of someone who understood both.

His work in the Media and Communications List established him as one of the leading judicial authorities on privacy, defamation and data protection. Landmark cases such as *NT1 and NT2 v Google* helped define the relationship between privacy rights and the public interest online. His decisions have become essential reading not only for practitioners in this jurisdiction but for lawyers and judges around the world.

But his judgments do not tell the whole story. His commitment extended beyond the development of legal principle to the strength of the institutions that administer justice.

He has been a leader in judicial training, serving as Director of Training for the Senior Judiciary. He has championed the wellbeing and effectiveness of judges through his leadership of the High Court Judges' Association. As Vice Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission, he has helped shape the future composition of the judiciary itself.

Those contributions may attract fewer headlines than his judgments, but their significance is no less profound. They reflect an understanding that justice depends not only upon sound legal principles, but also upon strong institutions and the people who sustain them.

The Bar is certain that the Division will flourish under his leadership. The judiciary will benefit from his wisdom, court users from his commitment to justice, and our legal system upon the integrity, fairness and public service that have characterised his career.

On behalf of the Bar of England and Wales, may I offer our warmest congratulations on your appointment. We wish you every success in this important role and look forward to supporting you in the years ahead.