

Judicial Communications Office

2 September 2021

LADY CHIEF JUSTICE SWORN INTO OFFICE

The Honourable Dame Siobhan Keegan was sworn into office today as Lady Chief Justice for Northern Ireland at a ceremony in the Royal Courts of Justice.

In the Nisi Prius, Royal Courts of Justice and in front of a small group of family and friends, colleagues and others linking remotely including schools and university students, Dame Siobhan paid tribute to Sir Declan Morgan for his distinguished service as Lord Chief Justice over the last 12 years.

She said it was a great honour to be appointed as the first female Chief Justice. She added:

“I know that today is an important day for women in the legal profession. I hope that my appointment highlights the opportunities open to all, young women and men alike to progress in their careers and that it offers some inspiration about what can be achieved.”

Dame Siobhan recognised the encouragement and inspiration she received from her family and from legal and judicial colleagues. She also commented on the importance of her appointment to the wider community:

“The legal system is intricately bound up with those it serves. I intend to actively and openly engage with all of those affected by the application of law in Northern Ireland and to represent our jurisdiction nationally and internationally. We have a strong tradition of excellence and high standards which I aim to maintain and enhance. I am looking forward to the undoubted challenge this new role presents.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

Dame Siobhan Keegan was appointed as a High Court Judge in October 2015.

Prior to becoming a judge, Dame Siobhan, a Queen’s University alumna, graduating with LLB Honours in 1993, was called to the Bar of Northern Ireland in 1994 and became a Queen’s Counsel in 2006.

During her career at the Bar, Dame Siobhan served as Vice Chair of the Bar of Northern Ireland, Chair of the Young Bar, Chair of the Family Bar Association, Chair of the Bar Charity Committee and she was a long standing member of the Bar Professional Conduct Committee.

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Dame Siobhan was the Judge in Residence at the Queen's University of Belfast from November 2015 until August 2021. She was a member of the Judicial Studies Board (JSB) from April 2016 until August 2021. She was also the Northern Ireland representative on the Franco-British-Irish Judicial Cooperation Committee.

Dame Siobhan was appointed as a Coroner in July 2017 and was the Presiding Coroner from September 2017 until September 2020. She was assigned to hear Judicial Reviews from 2017 until 2020. Dame Siobhan was the Senior Family Judge in the High Court of Northern Ireland from April 2020 until her appointment as Lady Chief Justice. During her tenure in the Family Division she was also the designated Northern Ireland judicial member of the International Hague Network of Judges.

Dame Siobhan was a Commissioner in the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) from November 2018 until August 2021 and took on the role of Chair on her appointment as Lady Chief Justice.

ENDS

If you have any further enquiries about this or other court related matters please contact:

Alison Houston
Judicial Communications Officer
Lady Chief Justice's Office
Royal Courts of Justice
Chichester Street
BELFAST
BT1 3JF

Telephone: 028 9072 5921
E-mail: Alison.Houston@courtsni.gov.uk