

## Transcript of Welcome Address

Ladies and gentlemen, may I start by saying thank you for coming today. It means so very much.

Chancellor, thank you so much for your kind words and for your real engagement with this University over several years which I know has been deeply appreciated. You have brought a great deal to this place and many have benefitted from your insights, your wisdom, your dynamism and your commitment, and for that we are very grateful. On a personal note, I am also grateful that you highlighted the changes in the University of Bath and not my changes over those years; I can't remember the last time my hair was the colour shown in the photograph. But may I welcome you again to this University today and thank you so much for giving the time.

I would also like to thank the Lord-Lieutenant, the Chair of the University Council, friends of the University, and student and staff colleagues. Thank you so much for coming here today. Thank you also in particular to the Mayor for his outstanding words. The relationship between the University and the City is so important, as you have alluded to so clearly and so eloquently, and your presence here today means a great deal in the sense that you value us; and we will of course wish to seek an increasingly important role within the City because that is in our shared interests.

I thank those who have been involved in the wonderful musical performances – the Chamber Choir and Andres. It is really a joy to listen to you. And Jane, thank you so much for highlighting the role of the academic work among the faculty and others related to them. Those images were so powerful and spoke volumes about the research and other academic activities of the University in ways it would be so difficult to do otherwise.

The Students' Union – can I thank them most warmly. I realise that Eve and her colleagues have been doing very important work at the NUS conference, particularly in respect of the new proposals for financing that have gone through. But thank you so much, Andy, for introducing the most wonderful video and for those students who spoke about things which I know I've got much more still to learn but which gave me greater insight into the very special place that the University of Bath is.

Heather and your colleagues – sport is a wonderful highlight of this University. I was astonished to learn that, I believe, in the last year over 27 medals have been won at three international championships by members of this University but, of course, your commitment to sport goes much further. It allows everybody who wishes to, to enjoy sport within the University and I believe in excess of 3,000 juniors from the area around Bath and Bath itself have coached sessions every week in the University. Sport has such an important role.

I was so grateful, Stephanie, for your powerful words about the scale of the University which, as the Chancellor highlighted, is so much larger than I am accustomed to and is requiring such dedication, hard work and expertise by so many. It was a joy to hear from so

many different people associated with the University more widely around the world who contribute so much. The University must be an international university as well as a national university as well as a global university and the roles that you've played across all departments of the University are so important to that.

I would like to say at the outset that I am humbled by this event. I am humbled by the kindnesses shown and it is an honour, therefore, to be able to say a few words.

I realise that I have a got a very great deal to learn but I have had the opportunity to visit some parts of the University so far and, although I wish to visit a lot more and meet a lot more people, already I believe that there have been three key areas that have spoken to me so clearly about what a special place this University is. And these three aspects I would like to talk a little bit about today.

Firstly, how special its people are. Secondly, its professionalism and thirdly, its pioneering spirit.

Already in visits, I have witnessed a wonderfully dynamic and expert group of people: staff colleagues and a most able and strong Student Union leadership. In many ways, the University's reputation is defined by its people: its student body, its staff – professional services and academics. For example, the University has an excellent reputation in placements, in large part owing to our excellent placement students. The broad membership of this University, including as it does local people as well as others from all parts of the UK and indeed from around the world as we have seen so recently, brings a diversity of view and a diversity itself which really ensures that the whole of this University is much greater than the sum of the parts. Many of our staff are among the country's leading young academics. For example, I believe 40% of the faculty here have been in post for less than 5 years, including some who were previously among the best in my old institution and, I have no doubt, others who have been recruited from the best elsewhere.

However for me, the collective role of committed individuals is much more important to the University than for simply driving reputation. Take teaching for example: over the past few years, I have met many alumni who have pursued widely differing activities after graduation. Not once has anyone told me that the highlight of their undergraduate degree was writing that essay or solving that certain problem. But time and time again, I have been told about the inspirational person – the teacher or someone else in the University – whose influence had such great impact and caused so much good. And of course that was one reason why, in the early days of the University of Bath, great emphasis was placed on recruiting role models first and foremost among staff, to bring real good. Research in an organisation also relies on nurturing individuals working within a community. I well remember Sir Jonny Ive, inventor of many Apple products such as the iPhone and iPad, being asked why he found it possible to be so creative in his company. One reason, he said, was that ideas are delicate like flowers. It does not take much to destroy them, particularly if you are part of an unsupportive community, but if you are in a supportive one, which respects individual views and encourages ideas, and sees people as special, then there can

be great benefits. And that I have truly seen so far as I have visited. Thank you so much for sharing more of that today.

The University of Bath has grown significantly in recent years, but it remains essential that we keep ourselves based on strong community principles where the individual is valued as uniquely precious and with a unique contribution to make, no matter who they are or where they are from. Whether undertaking teaching and research or ensuring the smooth running of the University – in Estates, Accommodation, Hospitality, Security or Finance to name but a few – each of us has an essential contribution to make.

The second aspect of the University that has impressed me is its professionalism. The ability of the University over the years to perform and deliver has been so impressive, and indeed the agility and high quality in the execution of new initiatives or decisions is truly outstanding. In the coming years, as Jane alluded to, this will be vitally important, particularly with the demands of REF, TEF and KEF. I have been nonetheless impressed by the range of new things that have been done such as the fascinating new courses which have been so popular and attracted such interest in recent years. Also what has impressed me is how in recent years major new initiatives have come out of this University that are having such impact. Activities such as:

- The Institute of Coding – leading new teaching concepts at national level, delivering digital skills in many cases to communities that would not have access to them otherwise.
- IAAPS – helping to solve those transport problems that desperately need to be solved for the common good.
- The Institute for Mathematical Innovation – allowing complex Mathematics to be applied to real problems in a very fast and efficient way.
- And, of course, the Milner Centre – that has been so eloquently spoken of and is so important and genuinely world-leading – CAMERA, CST and IPR as well as many other leading University research groups.

These are having real research impact in a very special and important way. The success of our future activities, as I've heard you tell me, will depend greatly on us professionally maintaining focus, showing real excellence in judgement and execution, communicating and showing humility in being able to listen and improve as a result. Quality must continue to be at the heart of everything we do, be it in the academic, in the professional services, in the sports, the arts and the other extra-curricular activities.

The third and final aspect of the University that has impressed me has been the substantial number of messages I have had from colleagues, keen to move ahead with new ideas either to improve provision greatly or to engage in new activities. I have been delighted to receive such messages, as when one looks at the history of the University of Bath, it seems to me that it is often most successful when it is pioneering. It is not by coincidence that the University of Bath's history book starts with these words: "The most far-reaching and constructive revolutions are those which come almost imperceptibly, with no undue notice and with little significant comment." And of course that is so true of technology over the

past 50 years. The impact that it has had on society has been breathtaking – being key to changing social norms, in allowing global communications in an unprecedented manner, enabling people to work in completely new ways, for wealth to be created, and lost, in unforeseen ways, allowing health to be enriched and prolonged, and having significant impact on local, regional, national and global governance. The definition of Technology, used by our first Vice-Chancellor, namely that technology is the intersection of science with society, has been proven to be so accurate in ways that he simply could not have been appreciated when he coined it. The University of Bath sought to be pioneering because it recognised that the skills and qualities needed by students not just for personal benefit, but also in the interests of the common good, needed to be new and different. The University sought to create a village feel with staff and students able to engage together not only on academic matters, but on those wonderful extracurricular ones we have been hearing about. Its recognition that students be well taught, well qualified, well experienced, particularly through placements, well grounded and well rounded, was ahead of its time. That outward looking aspect has also of course been a feature of the excellent research that is seen here time and again. The University currently has a strength and scale which is very different from what was envisaged in the 1960s, but it is crucial that this strength be used to build the future in the most positive of ways rather than maintaining the past. Given all I have learnt I have every confidence that the University will continue to be successful. All we have to do is look at the recent wonderful tables highlighting how globally recognised now many departments in this University are. I am therefore so grateful to work with such a wonderful community of people and thank you so much for all you are doing.

If I may I would like finally to thank the students here today or watching online. As I have said you are very much the heart of the University. Thank you for having come here to study, and for the contributions you are making, and I wish you every success in your work, your extracurricular activities and for the future. I hope that you will feel that your time here will have brought much benefit, because I do believe that the benefits of University education are immense. As my sister, who is so kindly here today with her husband, will testify, both our parents were the first in our family to go to University, the only ones among their siblings. They benefitted immensely from it not only in their later career opportunities, but in so many other extracurricular and personal ways. Some may well be unforeseen, as my wife found, having the misfortune of meeting me forty years ago on her first day at University, but overall the benefits will be valuable and lasting. May I also state that I do hope that you will have gained three things by the time you graduate: Firstly, you will have learnt what you are good at, not necessarily in respect of specific fields of study, but rather in terms of skills and abilities, as knowing those used well can be very important later in life. Secondly, that you know what you enjoy, particularly as if that aligns with what you are good at, you will find much fulfilment. And finally, that you know what your values are, what your principles are, or indeed what you feel is right and good. Because if you hold on to these throughout your life, despite the ups and downs, successes and mistakes, you will have an integrity and sense of purpose that will always stand you in good stead. This knowledge, attitude and skill-set will be particularly important as we sail into the uncharted

waters of the coming years to ensure we can make the best possible contribution to a wise, compassionate and inclusive community.

Thank you so much for sharing so many wonderful insights in this welcome event. Thank you so much to those who worked so hard behind the scenes to make it such a success. And thank you to all of you for coming or for listening online. And I hope now that those of you present will enjoy the refreshments in the foyer, and I look forward to meeting and talking with you all.