

Sir Jonathan Jones
Doctor of Civil Law
Durham Cathedral, 9 January 2025

Before embarking on a long and distinguished career in government and the law, Sir Jonathan Jones studied as an undergraduate at St Chad's College, Durham University, graduating with a degree in law in 1984. He was an organ scholar at Chad's – though initially with no organ – and, alongside his undergraduate studies, undertook extra-curricular activities in various university choirs.

After initially qualifying as a barrister, much of Sir Jonathan's professional career was spent as a government lawyer handling, among other things, public law litigation, legislation, and public inquiries. Across a 30-year career in the civil service, he held senior posts across a range of central government departments, including the Attorney-General's Office and the Home Office. Between 2014 and 2020, Sir Jonathan was – as Treasury Solicitor and permanent secretary of the Government Legal Department – the most senior lawyer in the UK government.

As Treasury Solicitor, Sir Jonathan was responsible for, and led the restructuring of, a central government department of approximately 3000 staff (including over 2000 lawyers). Sir Jonathan led the department during a period of exceptional legal and political upheaval dominated, from 2016 onwards, first by the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union and then by its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time Sir Jonathan provided legal advice to the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and UK Law Officers. He was involved in the design of legislation – including that which provided the legal framework for Brexit – and held overall responsibility for all government litigation (including, during his period as Treasury Solicitor, some of the most consequential Supreme Court decisions of recent times).

He resigned from the post of Treasury Solicitor in 2020 in opposition to the Government's proposals to introduce legislation into Parliament designed to breach the United Kingdom's obligations in international law. Sir Jonathan's resignation was

widely regarded as a principled endorsement of the rule of law at a time when that concept appeared to be under threat.

Sir Jonathan was made a Bencher of the Middle Temple in 2007 and appointed honorary King's Counsel in 2019. In the New Year's Honours 2020 he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in recognition of his public service and leadership within the civil service and legal profession.

He continues to make notable contributions across law and policy. He is currently a senior consultant for Linklaters LLP, a Senior Fellow of the Institute for Government, and Honorary Senior Fellow of the Bingham Institute for the Rule of Law. He is a prominent commentator on matters of governmental and constitutional law, and a social media authority on the mixing of cocktails. His enthusiasm for music remains, and he sings in the choir at Ely Cathedral, where he is also a member of the Chapter.

In addition to his distinguished achievements in the law and public service, Sir Jonathan enjoys an ongoing relationship with Durham, returning periodically with university friends and to contribute to alumni activities in Durham Law School – where he is a visiting professor – and at St Chad's College.

Chancellor, I present Sir Jonathan Jones to receive the degree of Doctor of Civil Law *honoris causa*.