

Wardens, Sheriff, Liverymen, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to make it here in bleakest mid-winter. And thank you Chris, for putting the Livery Movement into context and highlighting the importance of it all. It is a real honour to have you here and a privilege to hear you speak.

Now, it's no secret to our members that the Livery does such outstanding work on so many levels. Nor that we remain something of an anachronism to many outside these City walls. I joked with a colleague earlier that this was an informal dinner. "Informal?" he chirped up. "Doesn't sound like you lot! Is it dress-down Tuesday?". I explained that in our Company 'informal' means we only have three speakers, we don't drink from the Loving Cup and we don't sing the National Anthem! Which, I hate to say, didn't do too much to switch-off the teasing!

However, it is a real pleasure to be here amongst friends. And I know that, for many of us, friendship is one of the most alluring benefits of being part of a Livery Company. When we gather, we sit apart from the hierarchies of the workplace and the intimacy of family life. It enables us to share ideas, concerns and confidences amongst a widely diverse group of people. I'm going to talk about a few of them, and I do have permission to do so!

First, take my good friend Antonia Belcher. I met her when she was the only Porsche-driving building surveyor I knew! She was probably the only Porsche-driving surveyor. At that point she also happened to present as male. As we now know, her authentic-self is female, and she is now, of course, a member of our Court and a major campaigner for trans-gender rights around the world.

I'd also like to mention my old pal David Mann. We trained together, became great friends and my defective 'gaydar' completely failed to pick-up on the clues. However, we are a diverse and inclusive bunch, each with our own professional and personal challenges to overcome. David had, understandably, felt terrified of coming out to the Livery, but in practise, his news was met, in his words by: "Everyone making me feel even more welcome". David's 'Freehold' group is now eight years old and provides support and networking opportunities for over 1,400 LGBT property professionals.

Now, there's someone else here who has had a number of troubling experiences with mental health issues. Ten years ago, he had a major episode and was lucky to receive outstanding support. His wife has had her own ongoing battles with anxiety and depression. It may or may not surprise you to know that this person is me.

I'm sure I am not alone in preferring the word 'inclusivity' to 'diversity'. It suggests an unquestioning, and warm welcome, afforded to all. Amanda Clack is my go-to authority on inclusivity, as I am sure she is for many of us. She has written the only book in property on diversity and inclusion and I'm

sure she will excuse my describing her as 'renowned'! How she fits in the time for everything I have no idea, but she is a valued member of our Court and is a constant giver of sensible advice.

I know Amanda will agree with me that the issue is not any lack of sympathy for those with mental health issues but what happens next. Particularly in the workplace. Is there a subtle prejudice that ensures lashings of sympathy laced with a quiet shifting of responsibilities elsewhere? After all, who knows when they may be a little down or distracted?

These are not abstract musings. We sadly had a tragedy at work, related to mental health and a close colleague also told me he had contemplated suicide. I am well aware there are times at work when I could and should have done more. But, I have vowed to do everything in my power to ensure that never happens again. Including raising the subject in front of you all because we are together, in a completely supportive environment. One where confidences can be shared, and trust is known.

Our formal purpose is to support the property profession in many ways and I'd like to suggest that we don't forget to support each other. As I have stressed many times at work we are at our best when we remember that we may work in property but our clients, our colleagues and those who benefit from our work are not buildings, but people.

Although I have focused on inclusion to this point it would be remiss of me, however briefly, not to mention the topic that those people are raising time-and-again. It won't surprise you that it's sustainability. 'Impact on gas emissions', 'zero carbon buildings' and 'hydrogen power' were phrases that rarely passed my desk a decade ago. Now they are prolific. Which is, of course, a good thing. Our influence and ability to make them a reality won't just make a real difference to the environment, they will also make property – including chartered surveying – a more aspirational place in which to work. And a happier one.

These themes are not unrelated. There is more than ample evidence that people are happier going into workplaces where they feel understood. For many Gen Z and Millennials, wellbeing is linked increasingly to their belief-in the values of their employer. I'd like to suggest that this Company makes its own contribution by hosting an annual seminar on sustainability not only because it is the right thing to do but because it will help attract younger people to the Company who are driven by a commitment to the future of the planet and the role we can play in it.

We are not alone of course. RICS, the BPF and many of our businesses are looking at wellbeing and the environment. Helen Gordon, our final speaker, is President of the BPF and she has been paramount in their work around diversity, inclusion, and mental health. Helen – we are so glad to have you here and look forward to hearing more about what you and the BPF are up to.

But in our quest to maximise our relevance and our value I suggest that we can become the beating heart of sustainable property. We are, I believe, an incredibly modern company. One that couldn't be further from the Livery stereotype that led to my colleague teasing me earlier. I think that we may not realise quite how 'inclusive' we are. We need to spread that message, building on the strength it presents and push towards wider diversity and inclusivity in all respects. And, in the process, we can demonstrate the empathy, vision and 'esprit de corps' that makes me so proud to be part of this wonderful company.

So, thank you all once again for being here tonight and please could all Liverymen stand, raise your glasses, and join me in a toast to our guests.