“Ten years ago, I took the momentous step of leaving practice at the Bar with a view to practising as a full-time mediator. Encouraged and supported by David and Irene Douglas and joined by Nicholas we launched Independent Mediators. A few months later we were joined by Bill and Charles. Then Phillip, then Mark; after him Jonathan and then Kate and last but by no means least Andrew. The success of IM over the last ten years is due in no small respect to our Chief Executive, David, who has built and trained a highly respected team to run the first and only mediation chambers of independent mediators. As you may have seen from the recent message to you all, David has now handed the reins over to Nicky of whom we are all immensely proud. She and the Silsoe team of Ryan, Jacky, the two Sandras and Maureen are known to most of you, if not in person certainly by e-mails, and the feedback we receive is always positive and the mediators have no doubt that IM’s success is due to their professionalism and dedication.

However, IM would not be what it is without the loyalty and continued support of everyone here. This evening is a small ‘thank you’ to all of you for that encouragement and an acknowledgment that we value not only the referrals but also the constructive feedback and comments from you all.

In many ways this is a fitting venue for such an occasion. All of us here – mediators and lawyers have a common aim, and that is to bring reconciliation and harmony where there is disputes and discord.

Thank you for joining us to celebrate our ten-year history in this remarkable palace which boasts nearly 800 years of history and has played such an integral part of the development of this nation as our speaker this evening Ms Tricia Shannon will now tell us.

Enjoy the evening, whatever the result of the election may be, and please enjoy the state rooms and the Guard Room which will be available throughout the evening.”