Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Tracy Charbonnier

Please find below my answers to your questions with regarding the Haddington Sheriff Court closure.

1. What will be the local impact of the SCS’s recommendations on access to justice?

We would see the loss of court staff and a Sheriff with local knowledge. There would be a loss of advice readily available to the public.
A loss of local payment of fines.
The running costs of Haddington Sheriff Court are lower than if the cases were moved to Edinburgh.
The court staff that would be re-located to Edinburgh would no longer use the shops, businesses & services in Haddington. The town is already suffering in the current recession and this would aggravate the problem.

2. What will the local impact be on court users of the SCS’s recommendations?

It will be much more difficult for witnesses, especially vulnerable ones, to travel to Edinburgh to testify if the plans go ahead to close the court.
Witnesses and victims will incur extra stress and costs. Experiences in court can be stressful, traumatic and harrowing and their needs must not be ignored.
There is also an increased risk that some witnesses may decide not to come forward in the first place.
There would be increased travel costs and inconvenience for all court users. There is limited public transport, particularly for those living in outlying areas.
Delays in urgent court applications eg child issues would be held up to the volume of access being processed and heard in Edinburgh.

Mrs Tracy Charbonnier
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