Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Andrew Mellor

I am a solicitor, specialising in Criminal Defence and Family Law, mostly legal aid cases. My office, Somerville Russell, is in Musselburgh and nearly all my cases are dealt with at Haddington Sheriff Court. I and my colleagues have provided I believe am essential service to the local community. I have the following comments to make about the closure of Haddington sheriff court.

1. Other evidence shows Haddington is a good value, efficient court. The closure will COST money to the public purse. The government’s own figures bear this out.

2 Edinburgh Sheriff Court is already stretched, no evidence has been produced to detail how Edinburgh can accommodate the substantial amount of business from Haddington. Delays and expense will ensue.

3 Access to justice will be curtailed. This is certain and significant.

4 Loss of custom to local business. Haddington Sheriff court services hundreds of people each week, most of whom will buy in local shops and cafes.

In short the closure is a BAD idea that will COST money.

My fear is that the recommendation for closure will go through on statements made by SCS which are not borne out by the evidence, and simply because the recommendation has been made. The recommendation for closure has such important consideration for thousands of people, it should be properly considered and not railroaded. At the very least there should be a delay of their decision because it is clear there has been no proper consideration of the evidence. Surely that is what democracy is for?

Andrew Mellor
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