Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Peter Ramage

As a citizen of Haddington I have been asked by the East Lothian Faculty of Procurators if I would wish to respond to the following two questions concerning the proposed closure of Haddington Sheriff Court and to make Edinburgh the 'local' centre.

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

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

I have already made a submission to the local campaign petition, but it bears repetition.

I am against the SCS recommendations because I think the removal of this longstanding centre of local justice will make access to justice, and other Sheriff Court facilities less easy for those in the area currently served. Travel is an important issue in this, for both time and health reasons. In my view those most disadvantaged would be:

- persons with physical or learning disabilities
- persons in the east and south of the area who would face significant increase in travel time

In general, I'm sure few people like to have to attend court, but a local institution at least has the advantage of familiarity. This might encourage people to seek help or legal redress through its agency, when otherwise they might not bother. In my view, local justice is more fairly served by a local court.

Peter Ramage
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