Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from the Royal Burgh of Selkirk and District Community Council

Proposed closure of Selkirk Sheriff Court

We wrote to the Chief Executive, Scottish Courts Service in January of 2012 opposing the above and again in November in a letter appreciating the decision not to close Selkirk’s Sheriff Court.

As Borderers, this Community Council is fearful that the proposed closure of local Sheriff Courts, simply to save money, is a false economy and will lead to considerable public inconvenience.

We note with concern that Duns and Peebles are still targeted for closure and we find it difficult to understand the logic of this, as many of the arguments for retention of Selkirk applied equally to Duns, particularly with respect to transport. Also, Peebles Court is an admirably multi-use building and is comparatively inexpensive to run. The principle of delivering the law to communities at local level seems to be being sacrificed only for apparent short term financial saving. However when measured against economic cost to individuals and families, wastage of police resources compounding their manpower problems and the blithe discarding of an already proven and successful system has defied our comprehension as closures will certainly cost more overall.

We are reminded that the closure of Selkirk’s 18-bed Cottage Hospital and Casualty was occasioned by a belief (later confirmed to be fallacious) that money would be saved overall. The money subsequently spent providing replacement facilities at the BGH, the transport costs, the time wasted, the staff pressures and the overall downgrading of the service provision in Selkirk have all proved that the decision to close was a costly and predictably bad mistake. Alas the discovery was too late.

We hope a similar mistake is not about to be made.

We are nevertheless very grateful that the Sheriff Court in Selkirk is not going to be just another exhibit in the ‘Museum of Unintended Consequences’.

Dr L D Neil
Vice-Chairman
5 May 2013