

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



David Linden
Deputy Convener
Criminal Justice Committee

By email
criminaljustice.committee@parliament.scot

9 September 2026

**Chief Executive's Office
Parliament House
Parliament Square
Edinburgh
EH1 1RQ**

**DX 549306
LP1 Edinburgh 10**

Dear Deputy Convener

Following the evidence session of the Criminal Justice Committee earlier today on courts, delays and user experience, I attach the requested correspondence for the Committee's attention.

The Invest to Save bid was submitted by me on behalf of the Criminal Justice Board. It is a collective endeavour also including Scottish Government Justice Division colleagues. The Criminal Justice Board is the senior co-ordinating forum comprising of leaders from across the criminal justice system in its widest sense. I have yet to receive a formal response to the bid.

I also enclose correspondence to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. This preceded more recent and continuing positive engagement on these matters.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Graham
Chief Executive



Public Sector Reform Invest to save Fund 2026/27

Application Form

Project title: (include name of public body/SG Directorate)	Criminal Justice Public Sector Reform – Business Case
PBSU Reference	

2026/27 Fund

Completing this Application Form

1. Please refer to the **Application Form Guidance Notes**.
2. Please complete the application form **in full**. Check your application for completeness and accuracy before submission and ensure there are no blank sections in the form.
3. Assessment of your application will be based on the information provided. Chief Executives or Accountable Officers should evaluate the relevant business case that supports this application and assure themselves the application and governance are appropriate. Please do not attach any additional information or embed any documents in the form. If clarification or additional information is required, this will be requested separately.
4. All applications should be completed and submitted electronically to PublicBodiesUnitMailbox@gov.scot by noon 1st May 2026

Section 1: Lead Applicant Information

1	Name of public body/SG Directorate	Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service on behalf of Justice partners (see Page 4 for details)
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2	Main contact for application
Name	Malcolm Graham
Job Title	Chief Executive
Telephone number	
Email address	<u> </u>

Section 2: Project Details

4	Project start date		ASAP
	Project End Date		Phase 1 (12 months from start date) Further phases to be identified during Phase 1
	Date of expected savings/outcomes	When savings/outcomes will commence and when all savings are expected to be delivered	To be developed in parallel to the roadmap

5	Project Description Please outline the purpose and aims of the project. This does not need to be comprehensive but should be detailed enough to allow the panel to understand the project aims and outcomes and why it is needed. Please also describe how the project aligns with Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy.
This project seeks investment to provide dedicated specialist resource to deliver a robust, system-wide business case for long-term digital and service transformation across Scotland's justice system. The focus is not on incremental improvement, but on improved information sharing, shared standards and integrated end to end services designed around user needs. It is envisaged the project in addition to a lead Sponsor will also require an assigned SRO. Placing citizens and service users at the core of that transformation ensuring that a trauma informed approach is embedded, and transformation truly makes a difference to their experience of interacting with the justice system. We believe that this approach can also benefit the system by significantly reducing avoidable	

cost, driving efficiency, help manage rising demand, and create a more sustainable operating model for the future.

This is critical to modernising and transforming the current justice system in Scotland which currently suffers from fragmented, legacy and paper-based processes, with multiple organisations delivering services independently. These structural issues impact negatively on users of the system and limit the system's capacity to respond to rising demand and realisation of system-wide efficiencies.

This project builds on existing justice digital capability and innovation, such as DESC, Witness Gateway, DAS and other relevant systems. The purpose of this project is not to deliver isolated digital or process changes, but to create the conditions for business process reengineering and digital innovation which supports transformational service reform, leading to a modern and digitally-enabled justice system. It will do so by funding specialist capability to:

- redesign priority justice services end-to-end around user needs
- establish a digital-first, platform-led future operating model where digital is the default, but inclusive alternatives are maintained
- Establish the foundations for a platform-first justice ecosystem, reducing duplication and enabling reuse across organisations
- Deliver a coherent, collectively owned roadmap for long-term digital transformation, rather than incremental, piecemeal change and current silo working in justice organisations
- Produce an evidence-based business case that demonstrates how coordinated reform can deliver significant long-term savings, cost avoidance and demand management across the justice system.

Current conditions mean this is not achievable within existing capacity or funding models. Justice partners are constrained by fragmented legacy systems, high levels of manual processing, and duplicated effort across organisations. These pressures limit the system's ability to absorb increasing demand, respond flexibly to change, or realise efficiencies at scale.

The project aligns directly with:

- Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy, by focusing on prevention, collaboration, efficiency and better outcomes
- Scottish Government Digital Strategy, by embedding digital-first and user-centred design
- Cloud First policy, by prioritising scalable, interoperable and sustainable technology approaches over bespoke, legacy solutions

By investing in dedicated resource to redesign services end-to-end and develop a coherent digital-first, data driven, platform-led roadmap, this work will enable the production of a credible, evidence-based business case. That business case will demonstrate how co-ordinated investment can deliver significant long-term savings and cost avoidance, improve productivity, and ensure the justice system

can cope with, and adapt to future demand in a way that is not possible through current, piecemeal approaches.

The work and subsequent business case aim to explicitly align to national government standards by taking these approaches:

Digital First

- Designing services that are digital by default, simple to use, trauma-informed and accessible
- Reducing reliance on paper, manual processing and repeated data entry
- Supporting self-service and assisted-digital models where appropriate, improving consistency, trust and user confidence across Scotland

Cloud First

- Applying Cloud First principles to future options, ensuring scalability, resilience and cost efficiency
- Exploring scalable options like SG Cloud Architecture
- Prioritising shared and reusable components over bespoke technology solutions
- Reducing long-term technical debt and future migration costs arising from legacy on-premise systems

Data Driven

- Maximising the potential of modern technology, including data and the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence, as part of future digital-age services
- Improving data sharing, interoperability and system-wide insight, while maintaining appropriate governance and independence

Platform and Common Components

- Exploring opportunities to integrate with or reuse national platforms (e.g. Scotaccount, Digital mailbox, SG Cloud, SG App, Data Exchange)
- Supporting a platform-first justice model, enabling justice partners to build services faster and more affordably

Public Service Reform

- Designing a fiscally sustainable justice system
- Reducing duplication across justice organisations
- Improving productivity by simplifying processes and removing friction at organisational boundaries
- Enabling future shared-service opportunities and more sustainable operating models

Collaboration Across Scottish Government and Justice Partners.

This project is fundamentally collaborative. It will be delivered jointly by:

- Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
- Scottish Government (policy and digital)
- Police Service of Scotland
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
- Scottish Prison Service
- Community Justice Scotland
- 3rd Sector Organisations
- Legal Aid and wider justice partners, as appropriate

The investment will support cross-organisational teams to work together under agreed governance, shared priorities and a common vision. This ensures reforms reflect the whole justice system, rather than optimising individual organisations at the expense of overall outcomes.

This builds on the level of agreement, commitment and momentum that is already in place across the Criminal Justice partners at senior leadership level, and with Scottish Government. This collaboration reflects the sector defining a mutually beneficial need, presenting solutions to Government and working in partnership with them to devise and deliver the outcomes.

Importantly, this approach recognises the constitutional independence of justice bodies while enabling shared enabling infrastructure, service design collaboration and system-wide improvement.

- The project will not interrupt or delay existing justice digital initiatives. It will run in parallel with current projects, including the Justice Digital Front Door, ensuring alignment, shared learning and avoidance of duplication.
- This work provides a connective layer across initiatives, enabling individual projects to contribute to a coherent, long-term digital transformation of the justice system. Subject to future funding, cross-cutting transformation activity will be brought together under a single, system-wide programme to support sustained reform.

Learning from Others and Reducing Delivery Risk

A core element of this project will be learning from comparable large-scale public sector transformations, both within Scotland and beyond (potentially drawing on examples from other UK jurisdictions but also innovation in e.g. Estonia). It is important to recognise that existing programmes and work will continue in parallel to this project including some iterative change in each organisation but be aligned to the principles and standards we agree to all adhere to. The work will:

- Draw on lessons from other justice systems and complex public services that have successfully adopted platform-based, digital-first models

- Learn from previous justice reform programmes to ensure proportionate governance, strong assurance and realistic sequencing.
- Apply tested service design, delivery and change approaches to avoid known failure patterns in large digital transformations.
- Convene frequent meetings between justice partners to ensure alignment and impacting across portfolios of work, sharing lessons learnt and opportunities.

This learning-led approach will reduce delivery risk, improve confidence among partners, and ensure that investment delivers practical, implementable outcomes.

The leadership of the CJ System endorses this submission. It is in support of a programme of work that has been jointly devised and developed over the last six months. There is no viable alternative path towards funding the necessary preparatory work for the reforms laid out in this bid. Individual endorsements from CJ System leaders are available if required. The group of Chief Executives which leads this work would align well as a 'cluster', as per the public service reform work.

***Delete as appropriate**

	Savings options
6	Please describe any cashable, preventative or indirect savings, including reduced demand, avoided future costs, or downstream impacts on other services. Please also populate the attached spreadsheet.
	Cashable savings* Cost avoidance / demand reduction* System-wide or cross-portfolio benefits* This project will not deliver immediate cashable savings in-year. Instead, it enables the development of a credible, system-wide business case that will unlock significant savings over the medium to long term and the investment required to achieve that goal. The savings opportunities to be identified and quantified through the business case include: Cost avoidance • Avoiding further investment in legacy systems that are costly to maintain and increasingly fragile. • Reducing duplicated spend across justice organisations on similar or overlapping digital solutions. • Avoiding future remediation costs by designing services and platforms correctly from the outset Internal system demand reduction and productivity gains • Reducing manual processing and rework through end-to-end digital service design. • Improving data sharing and interoperability to reduce delays, repeat contact and administrative overhead. • Enabling staff time to be redirected from transactional activity to higher-value work. System-wide benefits • Establishing shared platforms and reusable components that reduce future development costs. • Improving flow through the justice system, reducing downstream pressures on courts, prisons and community justice services. • Supporting earlier intervention and better decision-making through improved data. • Greater capacity for collective modelling and planning against predicted demands and constraints. These savings cannot be realised under current arrangements. They require coordinated redesign and collective investment decisions, which this project enables. Why Invest to Save Without this investment, reform will continue to be incremental, fragmented and more expensive over time. Legacy systems will become harder to maintain, demand pressures will increase, and opportunities to exploit shared digital infrastructure will be lost. Failure to carry out this transformational change would therefore result in increasing costs for all parts of the system against a landscape of inefficient services.

Investing now provides the capacity to design change once, design it well, and design it together creating value that extends beyond individual projects and funding cycles.

Current Funding Situation

There are currently no alternative funding streams available to deliver this work due to budgetary constraints across the Scottish Government and partner organisations. While this proposal does not assume immediate repayment of funding to the Invest to Save Fund, it represents a material step change in the quality, efficiency and sustainability of services provided to victims and witnesses, leading to significant savings across the justice system.

Funding Payback

The proposal assumes that savings generated through reduced demand and improved efficiency will be reinvested into frontline service delivery across justice partners, where funding is expected to reduce overtime. It will strengthen trauma-informed support and contribute to long-term system sustainability.

Outcomes

7	Demonstrating service improvements
	Please outline in more detail what will be delivered and how this will drive efficiency or service improvement, including measurable service benefits and/or impacts on the wider system.

Demonstrating Service Improvement

This project will deliver the foundations required for transformational improvement in how justice services are designed and delivered.

What will be delivered?

- Redesigned, end-to-end service models for priority areas of the justice journey
- A shared understanding across partners of current processes, systems, costs and pain points.
- Agreed digital-first and Cloud First principles for justice service delivery.
- A prioritised, costed roadmap for transformation at a system level.
- A robust business case demonstrating how reform delivers long-term savings and demand resilience.

How this drives efficiency and improvement

- Services will be simpler, more consistent and more accessible for users.
- Manual, paper-based processes will be reduced.
- Interfaces between organisations will be streamlined.
- Investment decisions will be based on system-wide value rather than individual organisational need. This adheres to the Digital Strategy for Scotland.

Measurable benefits

- Reduction in processing times and administrative effort.
- Improved user satisfaction and trust in justice services.
- Reduced duplication of digital investment.
- Improved ability to absorb future demand without proportional cost increases.
- Safe, resilient and reliable justice systems.

Short-term outcomes

- A shared understanding of current justice services, systems and user journeys.
- Redesigned priority services with clear digital-first operating models.
- Agreement on standards, principles and future-state options.
- Improved collaboration and alignment across justice organisations.

Medium-term outcomes

- Reduced duplication of technology and services.
- Lower manual processing costs and improved staff productivity.
- More consistent user experience across Scotland.
- Clear, prioritised investment roadmap and business case for delivery.

Long-term outcomes

- A more resilient, efficient and affordable justice system
- Services that are easier to use, faster, and more transparent for the public
- Improved trust and confidence in justice processes
- A sustainable digital foundation that supports ongoing reform without repeated reinvestment

Section 4: Deliverability and Readiness Assessment

8	Please briefly list the key milestones to allow the panel to assess delivery. Please include a brief description of the project resourcing, mobilisation and management along with key milestones.	
	Key Project Tasks/Milestones	Date Expected
	Mobilisation: Multi-partner governance established;	June 2026
	Specialist transformation, service design and digital expertise onboarded (including procurement if required)	July 2026
	Discovery: End-to-end mapping	August/September/October 2026
	Duplication, inefficiency, manual processes and demand drivers identified and agreed baseline established	October 2026
	Design	October/Nov 2026
	Business Case in early stage for indicative budget	Nov/Dec 2026
	Preferred option agreed by Scottish Government and justice partners through governance	Dec 2026
	System-wide business case and long-term transformation roadmap completed	Jan 2027
	Business case endorsed and ready for submission to funding and governance bodies	Feb 2027

9	Please provide brief evidence of project readiness (e.g., business case status, approvals, procurement position). key dependencies and risks. Resourcing plan (internal + external), delivery governance and confirmation that any headcount constraints have been addressed.	
	The intention of this bid is to resource an appropriate team to build a robust business case for transformational change across the Justice sector in Scotland in order to drive public sector reform. Project readiness • Strategic alignment already agreed through existing justice digital governance • Senior commitment across Scottish Government and justice partners • Clear recognition that transformational change is required Dependencies • Continued engagement and participation from justice partners • Agreement on shared principles and priorities • Effective information-sharing and data governance	

Key risks and mitigation

- Resistance to change: mitigated through co-design and shared ownership
- Over-fragmentation: mitigated through central governance and platform-first approach
- Inability to evidence savings: mitigated through rigorous business case development

This bid specifically addresses the capacity gap that currently prevents meaningful transformation.

The milestones are detailed above but further detail of the activities for assurance are below with a governance model.

Mobilisation

- Establish multi-partner governance and delivery structures spanning Scottish Government and justice partners
- Confirm Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), Programme Manager and partner representation
- Onboard specialist transformation, service design, and digital expertise
- Undertake procurement exercise where required, in line with Scottish Government policy

Key milestones

- Governance structures formally agreed and operational (August 2026)
- Core delivery team mobilised and fully onboarded (September 2026)

Discovery and design

- Map priority justice services end-to-end across organisational boundaries
- Identify duplication, inefficiency, manual processing and key demand drivers
- Analyse legacy systems, data flows and interfaces between organisations
- Define digital-first, Cloud-First future service models aligned to national standards
- Engage users, frontline staff and justice partners through collaborative and co-design approaches

Key milestones

- Agreed baseline view of current-state services and systems (November 2026)
- Initial future-state service and platform options defined and agreed in principle (January 2027)

Business case development (Feb – May 27)

- Develop and appraise transformation options in line with Green Book guidance
- Quantify costs, long-term savings, cost avoidance, benefits and delivery risks
- Assess impacts on system demand, productivity, resilience and affordability
- Develop a prioritised, multi-year transformation roadmap
- Produce a system-wide business case to inform future investment decisions

Key milestones

- Preferred transformation option agreed by justice partners (**April 2027**)
- System-wide business case and long-term roadmap completed (**May 2027**)

Phase 4: Transition and Next Steps (June 2027)

- Secure senior and partner endorsement of the business case
- Prepare submissions for future funding and investment decisions
- Confirm transition arrangements to delivery phase, subject to funding approval

Key milestones

- Business case ready for submission to governance and funding bodies (**June 2027**)

Governance Arrangements

The programme will operate under clear, proportionate and collaborative governance to ensure pace, accountability and value for money.

Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) – Malcolm Graham

- Overall accountability for delivery and outcomes
- Provides strategic leadership and resolves cross-organisational barriers

Justice Digital Leadership Group (or equivalent senior forum)

- Provides senior oversight and strategic direction
- Ensures alignment with justice priorities, Scottish Government Digital Strategy, Digital First and Public Service Reform
- Endorses key milestones and the final business case
- Agrees aligned road map at system level

Programme Board/Design and Delivery Group

- Multi-partner operational governance comprising Scottish Government and justice organisations
- Oversees delivery progress, risks, dependencies and benefits
- Ensures shared ownership of outputs and decisions

Programme Management Office (PMO)

- Day-to-day coordination and reporting
- Milestone, risk and dependency tracking
- Supports assurance, transparency and effective decision-making

This governance model ensures the programme remains collectively owned, tightly managed and outcome-focused, while respecting the independence of justice organisations.

Resourcing and Management

The programme will be:

- Delivered jointly by justice partners with Scottish Government

- Supported by dedicated external specialist capability to supplement constrained internal capacity
- Time-limited and focused on enabling long-term transformation, rather than delivering point solutions
- Subject to clear senior oversight to maintain pace, alignment and control

This approach ensures the work results in a credible, fundable business case capable of unlocking long-term savings and enabling the justice system to cope sustainably with future demand.

Section 5: Monitoring and Reporting

9 Please provide brief details of how and what information will be collected to demonstrate progress towards the outcomes described in question 9.

Monitoring and Reporting Approach

Progress towards the outcomes described in Question 9 will be monitored through a combination of quantitative and qualitative information, collected and reported through established programme governance.

What information will be collected

- Delivery milestones achieved against the agreed programme plan (e.g. mobilisation, discovery, service redesign, business case completion).
- Evidence of service redesign outputs, including end-to-end service maps, future-state service models and agreed digital-first principles.
- Baseline data on current processing efforts, duplication, manual activity and cost drivers, with documented assumptions.
- Measures of partner engagement and collaboration, including attendance, participation and cross-organisational agreement points.
- Development of a costed transformation roadmap and system-wide business case, including quantified savings, cost avoidance and demand impacts.
- Identified benefits and risks, with mitigations tracked over time.

How information will be collected

- Programme management reporting through the PMO, including regular progress, risk and dependency reports.
- Workshop outputs and artefacts from discovery and service design activity.
- Management information and operational data provided by justice partners to support baselining and option appraisal.
- Formal governance papers and decision records from Programme Board and senior oversight groups.
- Financial and benefits analysis developed in line with Green Book guidance.

Reporting and assurance

- Progress will be reviewed regularly through multi-partner governance forums and reported to senior oversight bodies.
- Key milestones and deliverables will be formally signed off through governance to demonstrate achievement of outcomes.
- A final system-wide business case and transformation roadmap will provide definitive evidence of progress towards medium- and long-term outcomes, Including efficiency, demand management and sustainability.

Section 6: Financial Breakdown

10	Please provide the amount of funding required. This can be broken down into individual elements by adding more lines. Also include any matched funding.			
Project Delivery Costs requested		2026/27	*Future years' funding required	Total
Resource Costs to Mobilise Delivery Team		£2.5m Est	TBC as Phase 1 will identify future years requirements through business case development	£2.5m Est
Resource Costs for Partner Resource? See point below				
Other Funding Sources (matched funding)				
Total costs				
Comments – please include any additional information to support this				
Funding is requested solely for project delivery costs, primarily specialist external resource required to: • lead service redesign activity • support cross-organisational collaboration • develop the business case and investment roadmap Justice partners will contribute internal staff time and expertise – I know they committed to some investment previously so put this in.				

This investment is limited, time-bound and focused on enabling future savings rather than ongoing operating costs.

Financial Breakdown and Staffing — Justice Organisations will also have to commit to providing access to Subject Matter Experts and Technical resource in their organisations. Indicative cost is for this team alone assuming all contractors is £1,771,440 for 1 year. *There should also be built in contingency for increasing resource in year as the work progresses and matures as below is a best estimate. Consideration should also be given to secondments/loan from partners, FTC and where required DRC.

1.0 FTE Delivery Manager £750 p/d

1.0 FTE Programme / Transformation Lead £750 p/d

2.0 FTE Service Designers £650 p/d

1.0 FTE User Researcher £650 p/d

1.0 FTE Solutions Architect £900 p/d

3.0 FTE Business Analysts/Business Case/Benefits specialist £750 p/d

1.0 FTE PMO/Project Support £210 p/d

= £147,620 per month

= £1,771,440 per annum + possible partner costs

*Future years funding is to enable the assessment panel to evaluate the ITS bid with overall funding needed. There is no guarantee of future funding.

11	Please detail expected savings (return on investment) Please also populate the attached excel table. This will provide the main financial information for the application.				
Projected Return on Investment		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total					
Avoided costs					
Demand reduction					
Cross-portfolio savings					
Non-financial benefits (quantified where possible).					
Comments- please provide any additional information to support this (including how RoI has been calculated)					

The return on investment from this project will be realised through subsequent transformation enabled by the business case, rather than immediately within the funding year.

The business case will set out:

- quantified long-term savings and cost avoidance
- productivity improvements across the system
- demand management impacts
- non-financial benefits, including resilience, user trust and service quality

The key value proposition is that a relatively small upfront investment enables informed decisions on multi-year reform that would otherwise be unachievable, reducing the risk of further inefficient spend and enabling the justice system to cope sustainably with future demand. We have no alternative options to get this major efficiency and service improvement programme off the ground, and this is to some extent a product of the Invest to Save scheme constraints, as opposed to any limitation on the efficacy of the bid.

Section 6: Your agreement

By signing this application, the Accountable Officer/Chief Executive confirms all the information in this application is accurate and complete, are able to meet all the requirements and have all the necessary information required for submitting a bid.

I confirm Accountable Officers of organisations other than my own in which savings will accrue are aware of the Project and content with the basis of submission.

I also confirm that I will be liable to ensure the principal funding is paid back if any savings outlined in this application form are not realised.

Acknowledged and Agreed (Accountable Officer)

Name: Malcolm Graham

Designation: Chief Executive, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (on behalf of the Criminal Justice Board Partners)

Contact Address: Supreme Courts, Parliament House,

Edinburgh Email:

Signature: M Graham

Date: 7th May 2026

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



Cabinet Secretary for Justice

By email
CabSecforJustice@gov.scot

Chief Executive's Office
Parliament House
Parliament Square
Edinburgh
EH1 1RQ

11 August 2026

DX 549306
LP1 Edinburgh 10

Dear Cabinet Secretary

JUSTICE REFORM PROPOSALS

I am writing in advance of our meeting to seek your support for a long-term Scottish Government commitment to justice reforms.

Urgent action is required if Scotland is to have a justice system that is fit for the future. Rising levels of serious and complex criminal business, delays for victims in securing justice and overcrowded prisons are placing increasing strain on the system. These challenges cannot be addressed sustainably by replacing individual, now out dated technology systems or continuing to add capacity to the existing model. We must reform the criminal justice journey from end-to-end, enabling national justice organisations to work as a more coherent system, and make the best use of finite public resources. Without intervention, the cost of preserving the status quo is likely to grow faster than the cost of reforming it.

The latest planning estimates provided by the Crown suggest that High Court case registrations could reach around 2,700 in 2026-27 and nearly 3,000 the following year. This is almost three times the level of High Court business experienced in recent years. This reflects the cumulative impact of changes in legislation, and significant growth in the volume of serious and historical offences reaching court. We are responding by increasing potential High Court trial capacity to 26 courts a day from January 2027, ten more than the pre-pandemic position. While this additional capacity is essential, our annual modelling report, due to be published later in August, indicates that the average wait from pleading diet to an evidence-led trial could still exceed 130 weeks, compared with 22 weeks before the pandemic. People involved in the most serious cases could therefore wait around two and a half years for trial from the time of an initial hearing, even after this substantial increase in capacity. Such delay and uncertainty would have a profound impact on victims, witnesses, accused persons and their families, and would be fundamentally at odds with our collective commitment to a trauma-informed and victim-centred justice system.

The reform proposition

Justice leaders from across the system and within Scottish Government have developed proposals to progress this reform through 'Joining Up Justice', a cross-system programme enabling justice organisations and the Scottish Government to design and deliver change collectively. It would establish the shared operating model, processes, data standards and governance needed to manage criminal cases more effectively across organisational boundaries. Implementation of the new Sexual Offences Court provides the first major opportunity to put this approach into practice,

developing a future operating model for serious criminal cases that can inform reform across the wider criminal case journey.

The practical ambition is to reduce the time, effort and uncertainty currently built into that journey. We would seek to eliminate repeated requests and unnecessary re-entry of information, identify barriers to case readiness earlier, reduce avoidable adjournments, and prevent victims, witnesses and professionals attending court when a case cannot proceed. Victims, witnesses and other users would receive clearer and more consistent information without having to navigate organisational boundaries or repeatedly seek updates. Plans are being developed for senior judicial leadership and co-ordination arrangements to lead the reforms.

Better system data would enable justice organisations to identify emerging trends, anticipate future resource requirements and respond earlier to changing demand. It would also provide stronger evidence for preventive and early interventions, helping to reduce avoidable demand and strengthen links with health and wider public services. The intended result is shorter and more reliable case journeys, better-informed decisions and capacity released across the justice system.

The next phase of work will quantify these benefits and identify the savings available. Progress is dependent on the outcome of the Invest to Save bid, on which a decision remains outstanding. Until that decision is reached, our ability to develop the programme and strengthen the supporting evidence base is necessarily limited.

SCTS Criminal Case Management Reform

SCTS is prepared to make a substantial contribution through its separate Criminal Case Management Reform programme, which gives effect to the ambitions set out in our Corporate Plan. Joining Up Justice would define the shared model for how justice organisations work together; SCTS Criminal Case Management Reform would redesign court processes and provide the principal court-based digital platform needed to support it. It would replace increasingly costly and constrained arrangements with end-to-end digital case management capable of connecting securely with partner systems.

SCTS can modernise its own case-management arrangements independently, improving the resilience and efficiency of court administration. However, the wider value depends on justice organisations agreeing common data standards and improving how cases move between them, so that the right information passes securely with the case, responsibilities are clear and the next organisation can act without delay or repeated checking.

SCTS has developed initial proposals for Criminal Case Management Reform and is preparing an Outline Business Case in accordance with Green Book guidance, which we expect to complete by the autumn. The preferred option emerging from the work to date is to redesign court processes and implement an established off-the-shelf digital platform, configured and enhanced to meet our requirements and to enable wider integration with other justice organisations. Subject to funding, delivery would begin in April 2027 and take place in phases over five years, requiring an initial, one-off investment of around £62 million over that period. The estimated whole-life cost over 15 years, including implementation and ongoing operation, is around £140 million, with forecast cashable benefits of approximately £116.5 million. The costs and benefits will continue to be refined as the Outline Business Case is completed and subsequently tested through procurement. It is worth noting though that this investment will also generate a multiplier effect across the system, as further developments and the integration of partner processes would be able to proceed based on an established and modern platform.

The alternative is not cost free. Continuing with the existing platform and processes is estimated to cost almost £30 million over 15 years, while preserving the constraints and risks that now impede reform. That estimate also assumes that the end-of-life systems on which criminal case management currently depends can continue to be maintained. In the absence of investment in a replacement platform, there is a material risk of system failure, which could severely disrupt the

criminal justice system and those who rely on it - generating significant further delay, cause substantial reputational damage and require a complex, expensive recovery.

England and Wales invested £1.3 billion in court and tribunal reform between 2016 and March 2025. The programme was intended to digitise paper-based services, centralise administration and reduce operating costs. This included Common Platform, a single digital case management system for the criminal courts designed to improve case management and information sharing between criminal justice organisations. The scale and duration of that investment demonstrate the sustained commitment required to modernise the core infrastructure supporting criminal justice.

Scotland has not benefited from comparable sustained investment in criminal justice service redesign and digital capability. We should act before pressure becomes further entrenched, while drawing on the experience elsewhere to develop an approach suited to Scotland's institutions, legal system and public service reform ambitions.

Wider SCTS reform

In devolved tribunals, rising caseloads are lengthening the time taken to determine cases. SCTS is responding by developing more flexible multi-jurisdictional arrangements, improving scheduling and digital access, and making better use of administrative resources and supporting the judiciary to deploy available capacity effectively across the tribunals system. Recruitment and retention are made more difficult by terms and conditions for tribunal members that compare unfavourably with those available in reserved jurisdictions. As responsibility for tribunal appointments and terms and conditions rests with Scottish Ministers, urgent action is required to establish a more competitive, coherent and sustainable framework. Without that intervention, improvements to administration, scheduling and digital services will not provide the judicial capacity needed to prevent waiting times increasing further.

In the Office of the Public Guardian, demand continues to grow for powers of attorney, guardianship and related services that protect some of the most vulnerable people in society. We are transforming internal case management and public-facing services to reduce delay, improve resilience and make it easier for families, carers and professionals to secure the protections and authorisations they need. Alongside this, our Organisational Efficiency Programme will simplify, standardise and digitise administrative processes, remove duplication and release capacity for frontline services.

Next Steps

I therefore seek your support for a long-term Scottish Government commitment to end-to-end criminal justice reform, underpinned by the two connected programmes of Joining Up Justice and SCTS Criminal Case Management Reform. This would set a clear direction and provide a shared mandate for the Scottish Government and justice organisations to develop the operating model, investment and implementation arrangements required.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you before our meeting currently arranged for 25 August, if that can be accommodated. These proposals are entirely consistent with the Scottish Government Public Service Reform proposals. SCTS and justice partners are ready to work with the Scottish Government to turn shared commitment into a credible and deliverable programme of reform.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Graham
Chief Executive