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HM COURTS SERVICE ESTATES

I am writing to let you know that tomorrow I will make a Written Ministerial Statement on the closure of a number of magistrates' courts which are either under-utilised, or at which cases are no longer listed.

HMCS is continually reviewing the use of its estate to determine how it can best ensure that everyone has access to justice and that justice is provided locally. We need to ensure that we have a modern court estate that is properly aligned to where services are needed; that the estate is efficiently utilised; and that courts have the necessary facilities for victims and witnesses and to allow proper access for court users with disabilities.

Following full public consultation, I am confident that closure of these courts will not have a significant adverse impact on the provision of local justice. The public will continue to have access to alternative courts with better, more efficient facilities. Any remaining staff will move to nearby courts, and the local Bench, who should be representative of the community they are serving, will continue to hear cases within the Local Justice Area.

The Government must always look to ensure there is an effective and efficient system to deliver justice so that we can continue to provide vital public services that offer real value for money for the taxpayer. I do not believe it would provide good value for money to spend taxpayers' money to bring these buildings up to the required standard.

Copies of the response papers will be placed in the libraries of both Houses, and on the Ministry of Justice website.

Yes,
Jack.

JACK STRAW