



Asiantaeth Cymorth
Cyfreithiol

Legal Aid
Agency

Response to Consultation

Impact of Court Closure: Dolgellau Magistrates Court

Schemes directly affected by the changes:
Dolgellau and Bangor & Caernarfon schemes

Change effective:
1st November 2016

Introduction and Background

Duty Solicitor Schemes

This document is a response to the consultation issued in September 2016 in response to HMCTS's announcement of magistrates' court closures currently served by a Duty Solicitor Scheme.

Details of the consultation can be found here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposal-on-the-provision-of-court-and-tribunal-estate-in-england-and-wales>

The consultation ran from 19/9/16 to 10/10/16.

As confirmed in the consultation we have tried to keep changes to schemes to a minimum whilst taking into account the likely impact on levels of service to clients from solicitors whose offices will no longer be local to the court dealing with their matter.

The Consultation

The consultation paper comprised of two sections:

Section 1 outlined the court closures and Duty Solicitor Schemes affected.

Section 2 outlined the options identified to change the Duty Solicitor Schemes affected within your local region.

Section 1 – Court Closures and Duty Solicitor Schemes affected.

In the Dolgellau Region, the following Magistrates' Court has closed:

- Dolgellau Magistrates Court

In addition the following changes will apply:

- Dolgellau Magistrates court work has moved to Caernarfon Magistrates court.

As a result of these closures and other changes, we need to revise the following schemes:

- Dolgellau Court Duty Scheme
- Caernarfon Court Duty Scheme

Section 2 – Proposed revisions to schemes in the Dolgellau

Proposed Changes

As a result of the Dolgellau Court closure, HMCTS are listing Dolgellau Court matters in Caernarfon Magistrates Court.

Option 1

To support this listing pattern, we proposed that the Dolgellau Court rota is closed but the Dolgellau police station panel remained in force.

Option 2

To support this listing pattern, we proposed that the Dolgellau and Caernarfon court duty rotas were merged so that duty slots for the court were shared across all providers that qualify for the two schemes. Allowing a duty solicitor to attend all matters listed allows for court efficiencies to be realised.

As part of this option, the police station rotas of Dolgellau Police station and Bangor Police Station continued to remain separate, meaning police station duty qualification remained as currently set.

Option 3

To support this listing pattern, we proposed that the Dolgellau and Caernarfon court duty rotas were merged so that duty slots for the court were shared across all providers that qualified for the two schemes.

As part of this option, the police station rotas in Bangor and Dolgellau would also have been merged.

Responses to consultation & Next Steps

There was one response to this consultation preferring option 2. It was highlighted that Dolgellau cases are being heard across the listings in Caernarfon not just on a Friday. It would therefore be difficult to designate a specific court duty slot for this work.

We will therefore proceed with Option 2 and merge the court duty rotas of Dolgellau and Caernarfon but maintain a separate police station panel list in Dolgellau. This option provides the solution that best fits the working practice of the courts with listings now mixed but maintains local access for police station work. Furthermore, the proposed merged court rota applies only to duty work, much of which is concluded on the day. For those clients that require further attendances outside of the court, and where travel is deemed unacceptable, the client is able to transfer to a more local provider to take the matter forward.

The Caernarfon rota will be redrawn to include duty solicitors from both schemes and also to include the separate Friday slot currently covered by the Dolgellau scheme.