



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

Proposal on the future of **Stirling SSCS Tribunal Hearing Centre**



This consultation begins on 6 August 2025
This consultation ends on 3 September 2025



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part of the Ministry of Justice. It is also available at <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>

To:	Court users, judiciary, staff, supporting charity organisations, legal advisors and elected representatives and local authorities in Stirlingshire and Scotland.
Duration:	From 06/08/25 to 03/09/25
Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to:	HMCTS Consultation, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Post point 6.22, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ Email: estatesconsultation@justice.gov.uk
How to respond:	Please send your response by 3 September 2025 to: HMCTS Consultation, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Post point 6.22, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ Email: estatesconsultation@justice.gov.uk
Additional ways to feed in your views:	For further information please use the “Enquiries” contact details above.
Response paper:	A response to this consultation exercise is due to be published at: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposal-on-the-future-of-stirling-sscs-tribunal-hearing-centre

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Foreword

HMCTS is consulting on the proposal to permanently close the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre. This proposal is part of our ongoing work to review the court and tribunal estate to make sure that we continue to deliver access to justice, value for money and provide an efficient and effective service.

Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre hears cases in the Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) chamber of the First-tier Tribunal. This is a reserved tribunal which determines cases in regard to benefits and similar payments administered by the UK Government. Over time, some parts of the reserved tribunals have transferred to the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS). The Scottish Government now administers its own benefit schemes within the Scottish Social Security Agency, and therefore some of the associated SSCS tribunals are now administered by SCTS.

As a consequence of these changes, the number of cases being listed into Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre has reduced significantly, and the majority of these cases are now being heard remotely, rather than in person. The hearing capacity provided by Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre is no longer required, and retention of the site no longer represents value for money. The small number of cases where a face-to-face hearing is requested or required, can instead be heard at Glasgow Tribunal Hearing Centre where there is sufficient physical capacity.

We are seeking the views of local users, judiciary, staff, justice practitioners and elected representatives to better understand the impact that this proposal may have, and we welcome views on any other options you think we should consider.

I would urge all local tribunal users and stakeholders to consider this proposal and respond to the consultation so that we can consider your views before making a final decision on the future of the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre.

Louise Hird

Delivery Director, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Scotland Tribunals

Introduction

This paper sets out for consultation a proposal to permanently close the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre, as diminishing workloads mean the cost of operating the site no longer represents value for money. The consultation is aimed at tribunal users, staff, judiciary and justice sector organisations in Scotland. Responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in or views on the subject.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office and will run for four weeks. This is shorter than the six week period we would usually consult on for a proposal relating to a single site closure. In this case however, we consider that four weeks will provide sufficient time for interested parties to consider this proposal and provide a response.

We have taken the decision to not publish a separate Impact Assessment alongside this consultation document, as we are not currently considering any alternative options. If any alternative proposals are submitted in response to the consultation, we will consider whether an Impact Assessment is necessary to inform a final decision.

Background

In examining our court and tribunal estate, we need to make decisions about how we maintain effective access to justice while determining the most appropriate and cost-effective locations for our courts and tribunals. We need the right courts and tribunals in the right places, with appropriate facilities and capacity to meet operational requirements.

Court estate in Scotland

Scotland is a separate legal jurisdiction to England and Wales, however there are some tribunals that adjudicate on matters that are reserved to UK Parliament. The Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre hears cases from the Social Security and Child Maintenance (SSCS) chamber of the First-tier Tribunal.

The proposal is intended to consolidate the court estate in Scotland. The reduction of reserved tribunal cases has led to a reduction of in-person hearings, which in turn means that it is not cost effective to maintain the hearing centre in Stirling. Our estates principles, together with the responses to this consultation, will guide our decision regarding the closure of the court and whether any further mitigations may be required.

The proposal to permanently close Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre is based on the following:

- The workload of the tribunal venue in Stirling has reduced significantly. The Scottish Social Security Agency is now responsible for new claims and benefit payments rather than the UK government's Department of Work and Pensions, and;
- The remaining workloads for Stirling can be accommodated at the Tribunal Hearing Centre in Glasgow where there is sufficient capacity, and;
- The closure of the site would allow for savings through reduced operational costs.

While the provision and location of court buildings is a UK Government function, the listing of court work is a judicial responsibility. If the court is permanently closed, we will engage with the relevant judicial bodies in Scotland to confirm the distribution of work.

The proposal to permanently close Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre has been developed and assessed using our published HMCTS estate principles.

The principles are:

Ensuring access to justice for all

Delivering value for money

Enabling efficiency in the longer term

These principles were set out in the consultation response "Fit for the future: transforming the court and tribunal estate."¹

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fit-for-the-future-transforming-the-court-and-tribunal-estate>

The proposal

This consultation proposes the permanent closure of Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre.

The venue is currently operational and is located on the 4th floor of Wallace House, Maxwell Place, Stirling. The venue comprises of two tribunal hearing rooms, two waiting rooms, a presenting officer's room, a clerk's room, a medical room and a staff kitchen.

The property is occupied on leasehold basis, with the current agreement expiring on 31 March 2026. The cost of operating the venue is currently c.£150,000 per annum.

The hearings that currently take place at Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre would in the future take place at the Glasgow Tribunal Hearing Centre, at York Street in Glasgow.

The closure of Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre would reduce operating costs, and given the reduction of work due to devolution over time, enable us to centralise and focus our resources towards venues that are more suited to the requirements of a modern court house. The proposed closure would impact a very small number of tribunal users.

We have carefully considered the location to which hearings could relocate. If listing changes are required, this would be a matter for the judiciary to consider.

We would welcome views on:

1. whether we should permanently close Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre;
2. if we permanently close Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre, should workloads be heard at Glasgow Tribunal Hearing Centre; and
3. what other options you think might work.

When considering responses to this consultation and making decisions regarding the future of this court, the Lord Chancellor will consider whether effective access to justice can be maintained, whether the closure offers value for money and whether it would enable the long-term efficiency. Only when these principles have been met, will a decision be made to permanently close a court.

Devolution impact on cases lodged with HMCTS in Scotland

The devolution settlement relating to justice in Scotland has its statutory basis set out in the Scotland Act 1998. Under the Act, responsibility for courts, legal professionals, police forces, prosecution services, prisons and criminal justice work is a matter for the Scottish Parliament.

There are some tribunals that adjudicate on matters that are reserved to the UK Parliament, that still function in Scotland. These are referred to as Reserved Tribunals and are managed and administered by HMCTS.

In England and Wales, the Courts and Tribunals services merged in 2011. At the same time, similar discussions took place with the Scottish Court service and plans for the Reserved Tribunals were developed for Scotland. However, the decision to hold a Scottish Independence Referendum caused these plans to stall.

After the referendum in September 2014, a report was commissioned called [Scotland in the United Kingdom: An enduring settlement](#)² This report contained a provision that:

"All powers over the management and operation of all reserved tribunals (which includes administrative, judicial, and legislative powers) will be devolved to the Scottish Parliament other than the Special Immigration Appeals Commission and the Proscribed Organisations Appeals Commission."

The Scotland Act 2016 devolved these powers to the Scottish Parliament. And so, whenever the UK and Scottish Government can

2 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dd7aced915d2ac884de15/Scotland_EnduringSettlement_acc.pdf

in the future agree on a date, the administration of all the Reserved Tribunals in Scotland will move to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS). This has been the position since 2016, and conversations between Ministry of Justice and the Scottish Government are ongoing.

Separately, under the terms of the Scotland Act 2016, 11 Department of Work and Pensions administered disability benefits were devolved to the Scottish Government. The consequence of this being that in August 2022, Adult Disability Payment (ADP), administered by Scotland's Social Security Agency, replaced Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for customers with Scottish postcodes.

Appeals against ADP flow to SCTS and as customers with Scottish postcodes can no longer make a new PIP claim (from Aug 2022), PIP appeals have slowly declined to a current trickle (around 30 per month over Q3) with the expectation that by March 2026, receipts could be close to zero. This has reduced the work flowing into HMCTS, with PIP appeals previously accounting for more than 50% of SSCS appeals. HMCTS will continue to receive appeals against other DWP, HMRC and Local Authority decisions for the foreseeable future.

Workload

As explained in the previous section, the work being heard at the venue has reduced significantly. In the whole of financial year 2024/25 only 159 cases were heard at Stirling, averaging at just over 13 cases per month. Of these cases, just over 68% of cases were heard remotely or on papers. This left 50 face to face hearings over the year.

There were 64 judicial sittings in the year. Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre sat face to face hearings for one day a week on average over the year. Utilising the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre for no more than 20% of its time does not represent value for money.

Judiciary and staff

There are no administration staff or judiciary permanently based at the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre. The venue is used only for conducting hearings, and all SSCS administration work is processed in Glasgow. Currently if a face-to-face hearing is chosen and agreed, a clerk based in Glasgow would be sent to the venue for the day of the hearing only. The same would apply to a salaried judge, fee-paid judge or panel members.

Accessibility

The Centre is based on the 4th floor of the building, there is a lift, but in case of emergency, the lift would be out of commission. There is an evacuation chair, and the attending clerk is trained in its use in case of emergency.

Operating costs

The table below shows the running costs of Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre for the last four financial years. This includes rents, rates, utilities, service charge, maintenance, cleaning and security costs. This does not include costs (including for travel) for HMCTS administrative staff or judiciary. The permanent closure of the centre would allow for a reallocation of resources.

Running Costs	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total	£141,497	£149,682	£148,846	£146,904

Travel time analysis

The area covered in the postcode catchment for Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre is just over 3,300km². The population of the area according to the 2022 census is 315,254. This gives a population density of approximately 95 per km², which is considered low. The majority of the area is rural.

Journey by public transport

We have considered the travel time by public transport to Glasgow Tribunal Hearing Centre from the 11 largest population towns and villages in the postcode catchment area, on the basis that most people would be either in these locations or would be in outlying communities from these locations.

To comply with our measure of a reasonable journey, we have sought to ensure users leave home no earlier than 07:30 to attend their nearest tribunal centre and return by 19:30 using public transport.

Our analysis of the public transport journeys can be found in the tables on the subsequent pages. This analysis shows journey times, journey type as well as the complexity of the journey. In each case the journey has been assumed to commence on a Wednesday outside of the Summer or other holiday periods. We have, in most cases selected the quickest journey, except where a slightly longer journey would require fewer public transport changes.

Journey by car

The majority of areas that relied on the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre as their closest tribunal by car journeys are still able to make to get to Glasgow tribunal by car within 2 hours. 90% of car journeys that relied on Stirling as their closest tribunal would only have an increase of 30 minutes or less travelling to Glasgow, with the longest addition to their journey being 39 minutes longer.

Cost of travel

An Anytime day return from Falkirk to Glasgow is £20.20. An Anytime day return from Perth to Glasgow is £22.80. An Anytime day return from Edinburgh to Glasgow is £32.60.

A single bus ticket in Glasgow for an adult is £1.65. A single day multi use ticket for the Glasgow area is £7.80.

Summary

Having considered travel time impacts based on this analysis, we consider that journey times to court will remain reasonable and that our principle that the overwhelming majority of users would be able to leave home no earlier than 07:30 to attend their local court and return by 19:30 using public transport, if necessary, will be met.

In addition, it is also worth noting that SSCS users may make an application to claim for the hire of a taxi or private hire car if they are unfit to travel by public transport. This can include the user having accessibility requirements that mean they cannot reasonably be expected to travel by public transport, are in the late stages of pregnancy or if suitable public transport is not available or is not available at appropriate times.












Outbound - Journey to Glasgow Tribunal Hearing Centre by public transport

RAG assessment (Outbound).

Green – Arrive on time by 9.30, allowing for pre-hearing activities.

Amber – Arrive by 10:00, time for pre-hearing activities limited.

Red – Cannot arrive by 10:00.

	Pop	Post code	Depart	Route	Arrive	Length	RAG
Falkirk	35,590	FK1-2	08:46	Train (FKK-GLQ) 22mins, Bus (X19, 9mins)	09:25	39mins	
Stirling	37,910	FK7-9	08:28	Train (STG-GLQ) 37mins, Bus (X19, 9mins)	09:25	57mins	
Crieff	7,280	PH5-7	07:32	Walk 8mins, Bus (15A, 56mins), walk 5mins, Train (STG-GLQ) 37mins, Bus (X19, 5mins)	09:49	2hr 17mins	
Bridge of Allan	5,320	FK9	08:11	Train (BEA-GLQ) 35mins, Bus (X19, 9mins)	09:01	50mins	
Dollar	2,840	FK14	07:31	Bus (H2, 26mins), Train (ALO-GLQ) 47mins, Bus (X19, 9mins)	09:25	1hr 54mins	
Auchterarder	5,840	PH3-4	07:32	Bus (19, 26mins), Train (PTH-GLQ) 67mins, Bus (X19, 5mins)	09:37	2hr 5mins	
Bo'ness	14,840	EH51	07:31	Bus (F45, 40mins), Train (LIN-GLQ) 32mins, Bus (X19, 9mins)	09:25	1hr 54mins	
Callander	3,080	FK17-18	07:37	Bus (59, 51mins), Train (STG-GLQ) 37mins, Bus (X19, 5mins)	09:37	2hr	
Alloa	14,440	FK10	07:48	Train (ALO-GLQ) 47mins, Bus (901, 4mins), walk 5mins	08:52	1hr 4mins	
Dunblane	9,310	FK15	08:08	Train (DUN-GLQ) 38mins, walk 5 mins, Bus (X19, 5mins)	09:01	53mins	
Lochearnhead	N/A	FK19	07:31	Bus (Ember, 47mins), Train (DUN-STG) 7mins, Train (STG-GLQ) 37mins, walk 5mins, Bus (X19, 5mins)	09:37	2hr 6mins	

Some postcode areas are very rural, particularly around the lochs, and have limited public transport links. Some areas, particularly in the FK8 postcode area, such as Inversnaid and Criannlarich, would not be able to reach Glasgow until approximately 1300 leaving at 0730. However, these villages would also not be able to reach Stirling until midday leaving at 0730. Population data sources from National Records of Scotland, published in 2022. The population figures are not available for localities of less than 500 people.









Return - Journey from Glasgow Tribunal Hearing Centre by public transport

RAG assessment (Return).

Green – Return by 19:30 on time, leaving no earlier than 17:30.

Amber – Return later than 19:30 (but before 20:30) or leaving no earlier than 17:30

Red – Return later than 20:30 leaving no earlier than 17:30.

	Pop	Post code	Depart	Route	Arrive	Length	RAG
Falkirk	35,590	FK1-2	17:36	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-FKK, 22mins)	18:22	46mins	
Stirling	37,910	FK7-9	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-STG, 27mins)	18:37	48mins	
Crieff	7,280	PH5-7	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-BEA) 33mins, Bus (15A, 47mins)	19:40	1hr 51mins	
Bridge of Allan	5,320	FK9	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-BEA) 33mins	18:43	54mins	
Dollar	2,840	FK14	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-ALO) 45mins, Bus (H2, 26mins)	19:37	1hr 48mins	
Auchterarder	5,840	PH3-4	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-PTH) 68mins, Bus (19, 25mins) walk 7mins	20:07	2hr 18mins	
Bo'ness	14,840	EH51	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-LIN) 29mins, Bus (F45, 18mins)	19:18	1hr 29mins	
Callander	3,080	FK17-18	17:35	Bus (57A, 5mins), Train (GLQ-STG) 35mins, Bus (978, 32mins)	19:04	1hr 29mins	
Alloa	14,440	FK10	17:35	Bus (57A, 5mins), Train (GLQ-ALO) 46mins,	18:42	1hr 7mins	
Dunblane	9,310	FK15	17:49	Bus (X19, 10mins), Train (GLQ-DUN) 38mins	18:48	59mins	
Lochearnhead	N/A	FK19	17:35	Bus (57A, 5mins), Train (GLQ-STG, 35mins), Bus (978, 60mins)	19:32	1hr 57mins	

The impact of this proposal

We have taken the decision to not publish a separate Impact Assessment alongside this consultation document, as we are not currently considering any alternative options.

If any alternative proposals are submitted in response to the consultation, we will consider whether an Impact Assessment is necessary to inform a final decision.

An Equality Statement is provided at Annex A. Our initial assessment is that the proposal is not directly discriminatory within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010 as it applies equally to all persons affected by the changes included in this document. We do not consider that the proposal would result in people being treated less favourably because of any protected characteristic.

In terms of the possibility of indirect discrimination, HMCTS consider that the permanent closure of Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre may put at a disadvantage those with the protected characteristics of age (those who are older and less able to travel), disability, pregnancy, or maternity because of difficulties to the extent that they need to travel further (some users may conversely travel shorter distances). However, HMCTS consider that this option is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim as explained in more detail in the Equality statement.

The Equality Statement will be updated following analysis of the responses to this consultation.

While there are no staff based at Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre, we will work with the Departmental Trade Unions throughout the consultation period to understand any potential impacts on our staff, which will feed into the decision-making process. At the same time, our staff will also have the opportunity to put forward their views through the formal consultation process.

HMCTS complies fully with equality legislation and codes of practice.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper.

- 1. Do you agree with the proposal to close Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre?*
- 2. Are there other options for reallocating work that you think should be considered?*
- 3. Do you think we have accurately assessed the impact on travel times?*
- 4. Would these proposals have an impact that we have not identified?*

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

Annex A – Equalities Statement

1. Equality impacts

- 1.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the EA”) requires Ministers and the Department, when exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the EA;
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups (those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not);
 - c) Foster good relations between different groups (those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not).
- 1.2 Paying due regard needs to be considered against the nine protected characteristics under the EA – namely race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, age, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.
- 1.3 The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and its ministers have a legal duty to consider how proposed policies are likely to impact on the protected characteristics and take proportionate steps to mitigate or justify the adverse impacts and to advance the beneficial ones.

Direct discrimination

- 1.4 Our assessment is that the policy is not directly discriminatory within the meaning of the EA, as it applies equally to all persons affected by this proposal: we do not consider that the policy proposal would result in people being treated less favourably because of any protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

- 1.5 Amongst court users, some groups of people with protected characteristics, as explained below, are over-represented when compared to the local general population. However, even if it were established that in some cases (for example, the length of journey time to court) these effects constituted a particular disadvantage, we believe that implementation of the proposals represent a proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aims of court reform and efficiency.
- 1.6 Our approach has been to identify groups of people with protected characteristics living within defined areas of where the court is situated and compare them to national population (the ‘court user data’ section below details our approach). This allows us to identify whether any particular groups of people are likely to be disadvantaged by the proposals. Due to limitations in the available data on local HMCTS users, we have had to make the assumption that they are representative of court users.

Protected characteristics impacts

- 1.7 We have assessed the available data on the characteristics of age, disability, sex, race, marital status, and religion. Our current assessment is that the catchment area for Stirling is representative of the national population and only have slight differences in certain demographics. The population living with a disability is very slightly lower in these areas also. A fuller analysis of this data is provided below in the ‘court user data’ section.
- 1.8 The evidence we hold is set out in tables 1 and 2. Together these show the nearest proxy data sets we currently have on the protected characteristics of users at the two courts being considered. We do not consider that the proposals would result in any disadvantage for people with the protected characteristics of sex, race, age or religion. Furthermore, we do not consider that the closure will have a greater impact on these particular groups when compared to the nation’s population as a whole. Nonetheless we will continue to assess the impacts of these proposals on affected groups who share protected characteristics, paying regard to any equality impacts identified in the responses to the consultation.
- 1.9 A significant portion of the workload at Stirling would be in relation to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals, and by its nature we would expect the demographics of those making an appeal of this kind to have a disability or long-term health condition. However, receipts of these kinds are decreasing to single digits per month. We have considered these users in Table 1 and Table 2 which includes the proportion of those living with a disability for those living near the court as well as those who rely on Stirling hearing centre as their closest court by public transport. We do not consider the closure to have a greater impact on those with a disability when compared to the national population.

- 1.10 Although we do not currently have data on the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, and only limited data on sexual orientation, we do not consider that the proposal is likely to result in any disadvantage for people with these protected characteristics when compared to the general population.
- 1.11 To supplement our evidence, in Table 3 we have provided data from the HMCTS protected characteristics questionnaire 2023 which details the protected characteristics of those who use our courts. We have taken the data relating to SSCS responses and are split by digital and paper responses. We acknowledge that this data does not necessarily correlate to all court users and are provided voluntarily, however, it provides a helpful indication of a cross-section of the population likely to use tribunals.
- 1.12 Our initial assessment noted the limitations in the available data to assess the extent of impacts on the remaining protected characteristics of sexual orientation. The information provided in Table 3 allows us to identify the characteristics of those who were users of tribunals, which includes sexual orientation and characteristics of gender reassignment however, we are unable to obtain similar data from the areas close to and reliant on Stirling as their closest court for these protected characteristics.
- 1.13 We recognise that the need to travel further (either by car or by public transport) is likely to have greater impacts on older people and people with disabilities and pregnant women. Available data suggests that there is a slight over-representation of people with disabilities in the areas local to the court being considered for closure (a 2% difference which we do not consider constitutes a disproportionate amount). There is no available data to suggest that there are more pregnant women in the areas local to this court compared to the Scotland population as a whole.
- 1.14 Whilst increased travel may have greater impacts for those groups, those impacts can be alleviated, to some degree, by some of the mitigating measures identified below. For example, the greater availability of online information and virtual court facilities may reduce the need to travel to courts.
- 1.15 Overall, we believe that the potential impact is proportionate having regard to the aim of the policy. The closure of the proposed court will impact a small number of users and the savings and efficiency achieved as a result of the closure will contribute to a better service overall for users. It remains important to make reasonable adjustments for people of disability to ensure appropriate support is given. These are explained in more detail below in the mitigations section.

Harassment and victimisation

- 1.16 We do not consider there to be a risk of harassment or victimisation as a result of the proposal.

Advancing equality of opportunity

- 1.17 Consideration has been given to how this proposal impacts on the duty to advance equality of opportunity by meeting the needs of court users who share a particular characteristic, where those needs are different from the need of those who do not share that particular characteristic. Reducing the reliance on buildings with poor facilities to take advantage of a more modernised estate with better communication methods will help to generate a positive impact on all users, especially people with disabilities.

Fostering good relations

- 1.18 Consideration has been given to this objective that indicates it is unlikely to be of particular relevance to the proposal.

Court user data

- 1.19 HMCTS collects certain information on users of individual courts and tribunals, we have shown some of this data in table 3 however this may not be comprehensive for protected characteristics and is provided on a voluntary basis. We have mainly assumed that court and tribunal users are likely to be drawn from, and roughly representative of, the general population living a) in the vicinity of the court and tribunal buildings, and b) resident in local areas where the courts and tribunals are the closest venue of that jurisdiction.
- 1.20 This analysis has considered protected characteristics of populations at intermediate zones (IZs) level as recorded in the 2022 Scottish Census. The areas for which these courts and tribunals are the closest venue have been calculated based on our travel times provider from the population centroid of the IZs to the coordinates of the court postcode, where this is the shortest journey by public transport.
- 1.21 The proposals involve the closure of Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre, and the relocation of work to Glasgow Tribunals Centre. Due to the Falkirk council area falling within the Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre catchment area and being a similar size population, we have also included the protected characteristics of that area. These three Council areas have therefore been identified for an analysis of the populations living in the vicinity of the court buildings effected by the proposals. The demographic data we have obtained is provided below, in Table 1.

Table 1: The protected characteristics of those impacted by the proposals (residents in areas of court locations)

		Population resident in Council Area 2019			Scotland
		Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre		Glasgow Tribunals Centre	
EPIMS		198561		366559	
Council Area 2019		Stirling	Falkirk	Glasgow City	
Site closures		1		0	
Gender	Male	48%	49%	49%	49%
	Female	52%	51%	51%	51%
Age	0-15	16%	17%	15%	16%
	16-24	14%	9%	15%	11%
	25-39	16%	18%	26%	19%
	40-64	34%	36%	30%	34%
	65+	20%	20%	14%	20%
Disability	Disability	22%	25%	26%	24%
	No disability	77%	75%	74%	76%
Race	White British	95%	97%	81%	93%
	White other	3%	2%	11%	4%
	Mixed	1%	1%	2%	1%
	Asian	<1%	<1%	4%	1%
	Black	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Other	1%	<1%	3%	1%
Religion	Christian	16%	15%	26%	18%
	Church of Scotland	22%	23%	13%	20%
	Buddhist	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Hindu	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
	Pagan	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Jewish	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Muslim	1%	1%	8%	2%
	Sikh	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%
	Other religion	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
	No religion	53%	55%	43%	51%
	Not stated	6%	5%	7%	6%
Marital status	Married	40%	41%	29%	39%
	Not Married	60%	59%	71%	61%

Note: Data is based on the population resident in Council area in which the court is located, this also includes the council area of Falkirk as it falls within the catchment area for Stirling tribunal and is a similar size to the area of Stirling. The data is from Scotland's census 2022.

- 1.22** Stirling and Falkirk share similar demographics to each other, there are slight differences such as a larger proportion of 16-24 year olds in Stirling compared to Falkirk. There is also a higher proportion of people with a disability in Falkirk which is similar to the national proportion.
- 1.23** Residents of Stirling share similar demographics with the national demographics. Potential court and tribunal users living within these areas are mid age working-age adults, with higher proportions of those aged 16-24 in Stirling. Over half of those living in Stirling are over 40 which seems to indicate an older population which may impact those who are less able to travel however, this is the same proportion to the national figures. There seems to be a higher proportion of 25-29 year-olds in Glasgow when compared to Stirling and National figures.
- 1.24** Likely related to both the age profile and the city centre location, other demographics differ from the wider area. Rates of living with a disability are like the national rates. In the case of Glasgow, a much larger proportion of the population comes from an ethnic minority background, with a particularly high proportion of those coming from an Asian background 11% compared with 2-4% both nationally and in Stirling/Falkirk. The city therefore has a smaller White British population (81%) than the national population (93%).

- 1.25 Stirling and Falkirk has a higher proportion of people stating they have no religion (53% and 55%) whereas Glasgow has a slightly lower proportion (43%) when compared to the general and county-wide population. There seems to be a slightly higher proportion of those with the Church of Scotland faith in Stirling and Falkirk when compared to the national proportions. There is a higher proportion identifying as Christian and Muslim in Glasgow City
- 1.26 There is a lower proportion of those living in Glasgow who are married (29%) when compared to 39% in the national figures. In Stirling there is similar proportions to the national proportions. We do not consider that those with the protected characteristics of age, race, gender, religion, or disability living in these council areas will be impacted by these proposals.

Table 2: The protected characteristics of those impacted by the proposals (residents in local areas where the site is closest court venue of that jurisdiction by public transport)

		Population resident in 2022 Intermediate Zones where nearest court of jurisdiction by public transport		Scotland
		Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre	Glasgow Tribunals Centre	
EPIMS		S02003780	S02003233	
Council Area 2019		Stirling	Glasgow City	
No. Intermediate Zones incl. ³		93	380	
Gender	Male	49%	49%	49%
	Female	51%	51%	51%
Age	0-15	16%	16%	16%
	16-24	10%	11%	11%
	25-39	18%	21%	19%
	40-64	35%	33%	34%
	65+	21%	19%	20%
Disability	Disability	24%	25%	24%
	No disability	76%	75%	76%
Race	White British	96%	90%	93%
	White other	2%	6%	4%
	Mixed	1%	1%	1%
	Asian	<1%	2%	1%
	Black	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Other	<1%	1%	1%
Religion	Christian	16%	25%	18%
	Church of Scotland	22%	19%	20%
	Buddhist	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Hindu	<1%	1%	1%
	Pagan	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Jewish	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Muslim	1%	4%	2%
	Sikh	<1%	<1%	<1%
	Other religion	<1%	<1%	<1%
	No religion	54%	44%	51%
	Not stated	6%	7%	6%
Marital status	Married	41%	36%	39%
	Not Married	59%	64%	61%

Note: Data is based on the population resident in the Intermediate Zones for which the court is the nearest court by public transport journey time as estimated using analysis of travel times to courts. Data is obtained by Scotland's Census 2022.

- 1.27 Similar to the council areas around Stirling the 93 intermediate zones that rely on Stirling as their closest tribunal share

³ Intermediate zones are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in Scotland. The population for these zones are between 5,000 – 15,000 people or 2,000 – 6,000 households

similar demographics to the national proportions. There is a slightly lower proportion of those with a disability (22% for the Stirling IZs compared with 26% in Glasgow and 24% nationally).

- 1.28 Overall, the demographics of these areas seem broadly in line with little variance that might present disproportionate impact on any particular group. We do not feel therefore that the proposals are discriminatory, and any potential impact can be mitigated by measures such as later hearing start times and listing hearings at an alternative venue where appropriate.

Other data sources

- 1.29 To enhance our understanding of the potential impact on protected characteristics we have explored alternative sources of data that might help us understand the demographic makeup of potential court users and those that might interact with tribunals. Our data sources are limited, and we have been unable to identify a data source that would provide a comprehensive assessment. However, we have found data that provides an overview of protected characteristics.
- 1.30 The information provided below (Table 3) has been provided as an indication of potential users of tribunals and is therefore applicable for our consideration of the proposals outlined in the consultation document. We provide an overview of our assessment of this data in paragraph 1.15.

Table 3: HMCTS protected characteristics questionnaire 2023

Characteristics	England and Wales	Adults aged 18 and over
Gender		
Male	38.9%	44.3%
Female	61.1%	55.7%
Race		
White	84.9%	81.3%
Asian	6.1%	8.8%
Black	4.3%	5.5%
Mixed	2.7%	1.8%
Other	1.9%	2.6%
Religion		
Christian	36.4%	46.2%
Muslim	8%	12.7%
Hindu	0.5%	0.9%
Sikh	0.5%	1%
Jewish	0.2%	0.2%
Buddhist	0.4%	0.5%
Any other religion	2.1%	1%
No Religion	51.9%	37.5%
Marital Status		
Married	31.3%	32.7%
Not Married	68.7%	67.3%
Sexual orientation		

Characteristics	England and Wales	Adults aged 18 and over
Heterosexual	92.7%	96%
Gay or Lesbian	3.4%	2%
Bisexual	3%	1.6%
Other	0.9%	0.4%
Pregnant now or in last year		
No	95.8%	98.3%
Yes	4.2%	1.7%
Same Gender as birth		
Yes	99.2%	99.5%
No	0.8%	0.5%

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmcts-protected-characteristics-questionnaire-2023/hmcts-protected-characteristics-questionnaire-data-on-users-of-reformed-services>

1.31 There is no comprehensive source of data on the protected characteristics of court and tribunal users who may use the tribunal hearing centres. However, HMCTS protected characteristics questionnaire shows that the following groups of people are over-represented as users of our courts and tribunal when compared to the Scottish population in the census:

- a) There was a higher proportion of females who returned the characteristics questionnaire than the national proportions shown in the census. 55.7%/61.1% as opposed to the 51% of females in the census.
- b) The global majority have a higher proportion in the questionnaire as compared to census figures.
- c) There is slightly lower proportion of those that are married when compared to the national census figures.

1.32 While groups of people sharing particular protected characteristics may be over-represented amongst court and tribunal users, we are unable to quantify whether such over-representation equates to court users who use the tribunal courts. The data in Table 2 has been provided as a means of an assessment of impacts, while remaining live to the limitations of this as a proxy.

Other Impacted Groups

1.33 Other groups potentially impacted by the proposed closure include the judiciary and legal professionals. Judicial diversity statistics from 2024 show that the distribution of female tribunal judges across roles is similar to that for their male counterparts. For non-legal tribunal members compared with judges, a higher proportion of non-legal members are female, or from an ethnic minority background.

1.34 With regards to other HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff, equality assessments will be carried out by HR at the Business Unit level and the impact on protected characteristics will be fully assessed once the impact on individuals has been understood. We will engage with staff at the implementation stage to carefully assess any equalities issues and work through possible mitigations.

Mitigations

1.35 We recognise that as courts and tribunals close, we need to continue to modernise and improve the way we deliver front line services and to make the most of technological advancements and efficiencies. We also need to continue to provide reasonable adjustments for court and tribunal users to ensure access to justice is maintained. There are a number of mitigations that we are either considering (or are already in place) that will help to minimise the impact of closures on users. The list below provides examples that although may not be of direct relevance to tribunal hearings such as those heard at Stirling tribunal hearing centre, they are of wider benefit to HMCTS and in doing improve access to justice as a whole. These mitigations include the following:

- a) SSCS appellants may claim for the hire of a taxi or private hire car if they are unfit to travel by public transport, are severely disabled that they cannot reasonably be expected to travel by public transport, are in the late stages of pregnancy or if suitable public transport is not available or is not available at appropriate times.
- b) All guidance material, together with information about particular processes, are made available online through Gov.uk and the Justice website. This would include: the location, directions to and available facilities of the relevant court or tribunal, guidance on mediation, how to make a claim, how to appeal, and how to make a complaint. In addition, these websites provide useful links and signposts users to related websites such as: Resolution, National Family Mediation, Community Legal Advice, Citizens Advice, Consumer Direct, Ofcom and Ofgem amongst others. Public information is reviewed regularly.
- c) Provision of business and contact centres for some services (e.g. County Court Money Claims Centre) mean that services can be accessed by post and phone until the hearing (if a hearing is required).
- d) Online services, such as Money Claims Online and Possession Claims Online allow online access to services up to the hearing stage (if required).
- e) Alternative Dispute Resolution is promoted where appropriate, which reduces reliance on court hearings.
- f) Reasonable disability adjustments are undertaken in courts in accordance with the existing reasonable disability adjustments policy. Guidance is available to all staff, along with a central advice point, and has recently been updated with training due to be rolled out to staff during this year. Examples of adjustments relevant to this decision included:

- identification of blue badge parking near the receiving court for those with mobility difficulties;
 - use of the staff car park where necessary for disabled users; and consideration of an alternative venue where access is problematic.
- g) Video links for criminal courts are used as follows:
- prison to court video links allow defendants to appear from custody in magistrates' courts;
 - additional video links are within the court to allow vulnerable witnesses to give evidence without facing the defendant; and
 - the court will always decide whether it is appropriate to conduct a hearing in a certain way, and the parties will also be able to make representations. In making its decision the court should consider whether any parties or witnesses have a disability (e.g. visually or hearing impaired) or are vulnerable and would benefit from face to face contact to be able to effectively participate in the case.
- h) Assisted Digital provision will support the digital access needs of individuals who are currently not able to easily engage with online services to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.
- i) Facilities and provisions at the remaining sites can include disabled access, hearing enhancement facilities, baby changing facilities and video-conferencing and prison link facilities. The exact facilities available at a court site can be found on our website: <https://courttribunalfinder.service.gov.uk/search/>. If appropriate facilities are not available arrangements can be made by contacting the court to determine reasonable adjustments that might be made, including, where necessary, use of an alternative venue.

Conclusions

- 1.36** We acknowledge that the closure of Stirling Tribunal Hearing Centre would mean longer journey times for some users, had the court been operational. These journey times will be reasonable based on our stated measure of what constitutes a reasonable journey. However, we acknowledge that there will be some users who will find longer journey times problematic. As we do currently, specific access issues will be taken into account at the point of listing a hearing – for example providing a later start time or finish time if required.
- 1.37** Although increased journeys have the potential to impact some people with protected characteristics, the impact is expected to be limited and justified in the context of the aim of the policy. The mitigations set out above will continue to ensure access to justice is maintained. Many of the services traditionally accessed by face to face visits to court are being offered online. Some hearings can also be conducted via telephone or video link and court users are being offered local alternatives to hearings (mediation). All of these measures are reducing the need to travel to buildings to access court services.
- 1.38** For those people who still need to attend court, reasonable disability adjustments are offered and other measures such as later hearing start times will help to minimise impacts for those with transport difficulties.
- 1.39** In the long-term, the savings generating from the closure will contribute towards funding the reform of court and tribunal services including improvements at tribunals receiving the work of a closing building. Overall, therefore, we consider that the decision to close Stirling SSCS and the likely resulting impacts considered above represent a proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aim of a modernised, efficient court and tribunal service.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself.

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

Contact details/ How to respond

Please send your response by 3 September 2025 to:

HMCTS Consultation
HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Property Directorate
Post point 6.22
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmcts/index.htm.

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from [email/telephone number of sponsoring policy division].

Publication of response

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published shortly after the consultation has closed. The response paper will be available online at www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmcts/index.htm.

Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

Confidentiality

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If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on HMCTS.

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Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>



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