

The Future of Limavady Courthouse

Summary report of consultation responses and
decision on the way forward

2 October 2026

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Ministerial Foreword

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an Agency of the Department of Justice (DoJ). In support of DoJ's Mission of "working in partnership to create a fair, just and safe community where we respect the law and each other", NICTS has three overarching Aims: Working in Partnership; Supporting the Judiciary; Modernising Courts and Tribunals.

*'Making the Place for Justice'*¹ is the NICTS' Estate Strategy, which was published in December 2023, following engagement with an Estate Strategy Advisory Group comprising representatives from stakeholders and justice partners. The Strategy is structured around 4 Aims and 12 Strategic Outcomes, that if realised, will result in a courts and tribunals estate that can provide modernised and improved facilities for all citizens of Northern Ireland.

This consultation proposal was for the permanent closure and disposal of Limavady Courthouse, resulting in the permanent reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to an alternative courthouse within the NICTS estate.

Through the recent public consultation, I sought the views of local political representatives, court users, judiciary, the legal profession, other justice sector organisations, the community sector and other interested parties across Northern Ireland to better understand the impact that the proposal may have.

I would like to thank those who took the time to respond to the consultation as their responses have been helpful in informing the way forward.

Following careful consideration of all of the responses received, I have decided to proceed with the permanent closure and disposal of Limavady Courthouse.

Within an increasingly constrained financial envelope, this decision will enable NICTS to prioritise investment to provide improved user experience, improved value for money, improved resilience and improved sustainability across the NICTS estate, whilst ensuring that the people of Limavady continue to have access to justice within higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities.

Naomi Long MLA
Minister of Justice

¹ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/nicts-estates-strategy-23-30.pdf>

Proposal

This consultation sought views on a proposal for the permanent closure and disposal of Limavady Courthouse, resulting in the permanent reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to an alternative courthouse in the NICTS estate that provides better facilities to service users.

Limavady Courthouse is currently temporarily closed. It was last used for court business in March 2020, when it operated as a Hearing Centre for Adult Magistrates Court once a week. As pandemic-related public health measures could not be accommodated in Limavady Courthouse, Limavady business was transferred to Ballymena Courthouse, then to Coleraine Courthouse, where it continues to be heard once a week.

As case listing is a judicial matter, this consultation did not propose any change to the current operational arrangement of the separate listing of Limavady court business in Coleraine Courthouse.

Following consultation, if a decision was taken to permanently close Limavady Courthouse, NICTS would be required to dispose of Limavady Courthouse according to the policy on the Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland² which provides opportunities for disposal through identifiable pathways: Internal Market Public Sector Circulation, Internal Market Community Asset Transfer Circulation or External Market.

The funding derived from the disposal of Limavady Courthouse, and the revenue released through reduced running and maintenance costs, would be managed within the overall Departmental budget.

² <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/lps-disposal-surplus-public-sector-property-ni-policy.pdf>

Consultation summary

Further detail on the proposal, policy considerations and the impact of this proposal on NICTS stakeholders was provided within the documents which were published on the Department of Justice website³:

- Consultation Paper
- Equality Screening
- Rural Needs Impact Assessment
- Legal Aid Impact Assessment
- Travel Impact Assessment

Anyone with an interest in, or views on, the future of Limavady Courthouse was encouraged to consider the proposal and respond to the consultation. Responses were accepted through an online consultation form, paper consultation form or by email. Respondents were only asked to identify themselves if responding on behalf of an organisation.

Respondents were invited to provide their views on the following consultation questions:

- Is the proposal to permanently close Limavady Courthouse reasonable and justified, taking into account the considerations set out in the consultation paper and impact assessments?
- Is there any other information or comment you would like to provide in relation to the proposal or impact assessments, to inform the decision in relation to the future of Limavady Courthouse?
- Should a decision be taken to close Limavady Courthouse, do you have any comments in relation to potential future use of the building?

Emails containing information on how to respond to the consultation were issued to 349 organisations and individuals on the Department's consultation list. The DoJ Press Office posted on social media channels at various stages throughout the consultation being live. Information on how to respond to the consultation was displayed within Coleraine Courthouse, where Limavady Court business is currently heard.

The consultation period ran for a period of 12 weeks from 29 May 2026 to 21 August 2026.

³ <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-future-limavady-courthouse>

Consultation responses

30 consultation responses were received; 4 email responses and 26 online form responses. A response was not required for all questions within the survey, therefore the number of responses for each question varies. Details of this are provided in the analysis of each individual question.

Section 1: About you	
Question	Total responses
Q1: Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?	30 (100%)
Q2: If you would prefer for your response and/or organisation not to be published, please indicate why you would regard the information you provide as confidential	5 (16.67%)
Q3: If you wish to be informed about the progress of the proposals detailed in this consultation, please provide an email address	12 (40%)

Section 2: About your organisation	
Question	Total responses
Q4: Tell us the name of your organisation	8 (26.67%)

Section 3: Proposal on the future of Limavady Courthouse	
Question	Total responses
Q5: Is the proposal to permanently close Limavady Courthouse reasonable and justified, taking into account the considerations set out in the consultation paper and impact assessments?	30 (100%)
Q6: Is there any other information or comment you would like to provide in relation to the proposal or impact assessments, to inform the decision in relation to the future of Limavady Courthouse?	14 (46.67%)
Q7: Should a decision be taken to close Limavady Courthouse, do you have any comments in relation to potential future use of the building?	24 (80%)

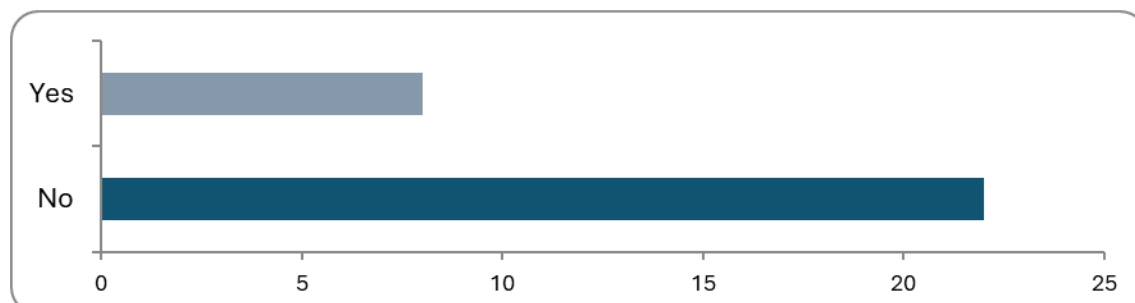
For multiple-choice questions, quantitative data is presented in charts.

For open-ended questions, respondent comments have been analysed thematically.

Section 1: About you

Q1: Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

There were 30 responses to this question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	8	26.67%
No	22	73.33%
Not Answered	0	0%

Q2: If you would prefer for your response and/or organisation not to be published, please indicate why you would regard the information you provide as confidential

There were 3 responses to this question:

- A response which stated “N/A”.
- A response containing a general comment about the proposal, which has been considered as part of the thematic analysis of responses to Question 6.
- A response from an individual asking for their response to be kept confidential.

Q3: If you wish to be informed about the progress of the proposals detailed in this consultation, please provide an email address

There were 12 responses to this question.

Those who provided an email address will receive a notification of the publication of this consultation response summary report.

Section 2: About your organisation

Q4: Tell us the name of your organisation

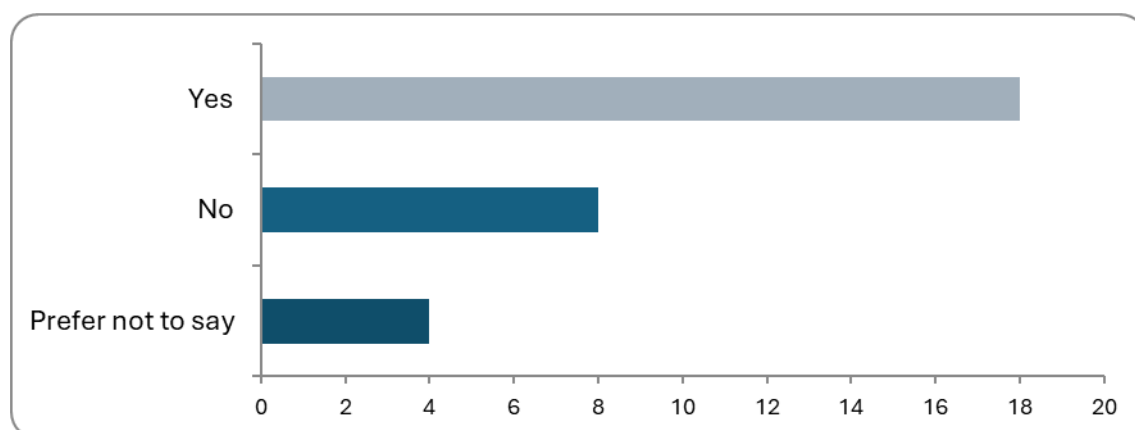
There were 8 responses to this question:

- Men's Action Network
- Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
- Gregory Campbell MP DUP
- DUP
- Roe Valley Enterprises Ltd
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland
- Limavady Town Centre Forum
- Royal Society of Ulster Architects

Section 3: Proposal on the future of Limavady Courthouse

Q5: Is the proposal to permanently close Limavady Courthouse reasonable and justified, taking into account the considerations set out in the consultation paper and impact assessments?

There were 30 responses to this question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	18	60%
No	8	26.67%
Prefer not to say/Not Answered	4	13.33%

Q6: Is there any other information or comment you would like to provide in relation to the proposal or impact assessments, to inform the decision in relation to the future of Limavady Courthouse?

There were 15 comment responses to this question. As noted above, comments from a response to Question 2 have been included in the thematic analysis for this question.

One response stated “*As my previous comments*”.

7 responses were received from respondents who answered “Yes” to Question 5, so responses were generally supportive of the consultation proposal. Comments have been categorised by theme. In some cases, a single response contained more than one comment.

Comment themes	Number of comments
Acknowledgement that sufficient capacity and better facilities are available at Coleraine courthouse / temporary reallocation has had no significant adverse impact on ability to support court business	4
Acknowledgement that NICTS use of the building is low	3
Acknowledgement that the building does not provide adequate facilities for victims and witnesses	2
Acknowledgement that the building has poor/unsafe conditions for detainees and custody staff	2
Acknowledgement that significant expenditure would be required for building maintenance and to address identified building deficiencies	2
Acknowledgement that the building has poor performance in terms of Disability Discrimination Act compliance	2
Acknowledgement that disposal presents an opportunity to reinvest funding elsewhere within NICTS	2
Suggestion that the building should be brought back into active use for community benefit	2
Concern about the impact of increased travel on court users, particularly financial impact, and impact on individuals subject to probation supervision; people with disabilities or health conditions; those on low incomes; individuals with limited access to private transport; and those living in rural areas.	2
Acknowledgement of the benefits of modern, accessible and resilient facilities for staff, judiciary, legal representatives, defendants and victims.	2
Concern about the building becoming derelict	1

Suggestion for NICTS to continue to work collaboratively with justice partners to monitor and mitigate any emerging issues relating to attendance accessibility and engagement with court processes.	1
Suggestion that a Rural Impact Assessment would be required	1

6 responses were received from respondents who answered “No” to Question 5, so responses were generally unsupportive of the consultation proposal.

Comment themes	Number of comments
Concern that access to justice should remain visible and accessible in the local area to maintain confidence in the justice system	5
Concern that increased travel requirements due to the closure would have a negative impact on court users (specific comments regarding impact on the PSNI, the elderly, non-drivers, impact during the winter months, financial impact and time impact)	4
Acknowledgement of the building deficiencies for court business	3
Concern about the potential loss of a landmark building in the town	3
Suggestion for the relocation of Limavady Court to an alternative public building in Limavady, such as the local police station	2
Suggestion that any future use of the courthouse building must be carefully planned to support the vitality of the town centre.	2

3 responses were received from respondents who answered “Preferred not to say” to Question 5 or who did not provide an answer to Question 5 in their response.

Comment themes	Number of comments
Concern about loss of economic benefit to town for hospitality, retail services and professional services for those attending court	1
Suggestion to ensure that impact assessment considers impact of increased travel on court users, particularly whether disability, caring responsibilities or mobility constraints make the journey materially harder; and whether the cost is likely to be prohibitive for people of limited means.	1
Suggestion to retain courthouse due to proximity to Magilligan Prison	1

Q7: Should a decision be taken to close Limavady Courthouse, do you have any comments in relation to potential future use of the building?

There were 24 comment responses to this question.

Comments have been categorised by theme. In some cases, a single response contained more than one comment.

Comment themes	Number of comments
Suggestion to use building for community/public use, including specific suggestions for social housing, a youth community centre, or an indoor market	9
Concern about the building becoming derelict	6
Suggestion that any future use must be carefully considered to support community needs in the area, maximise public value and provide sufficient occupation to support buildings ongoing care	5
Suggestion to use the building as a restaurant/cafe	5
Suggestion for multi-functional, mixed-use model, ensuring sustainability and maximum community benefit (including specific suggestions for a community hub from which outreach services and support services are delivered for victims and vulnerable individuals; Roe Valley Enterprise, Innovation & Community Hub, a Flexible Civic Innovation and Community Resource Centre, and dedicated rural men's health and wellbeing facility)	4
Concern about preserving the heritage value and character of the property	3
Suggestion to use the building as a museum	3
Suggestion to use building as an arts/music/entertainment venue	3
Suggestion to use the building as a public house	3
Concern about demolition	2
Suggestion to re-open the courthouse for court business	2
Suggestion to relocate Limavady Court to an alternative public building in Limavady, such as the local police station	2
Suggestion to use the building for a local business	2
Concern about NICTS not maintaining the building adequately prior to disposal	1
Concern about the building being used as a public house	1

NICTS response

NICTS fully considered all of the consultation responses.

The majority (60%) of respondents agreed that the proposal to permanently close Limavady Courthouse was reasonable and justified, taking into account the considerations set out in the consultation paper and impact assessments.

26.67% of respondents did not agree that the proposal to permanently close Limavady Courthouse was reasonable and justified, taking into account the considerations set out in the consultation paper and impact assessments. The remaining 13.33% of respondents did not clearly indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal.

NICTS has provided a response to comments that were unsupportive of the proposal.

Comment theme	Departmental response
Access to justice should remain visible and accessible in the local area to maintain confidence in the justice system	Attendance at Court is an important part of the justice system, and proximity to the courthouse is a relevant aspect in terms of access to justice. As detailed in the Consultation Paper, Rural Needs Impact Assessment, Equality Screening and Travel Impact Assessment, taking the impacts and mitigations into account, NICTS considers that that the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine is justified by the legitimate aim of implementing the NICTS Estate Strategy (to achieve improved user experience, increased resilience, improved value for money and improved sustainability across the estate) and by providing Limavady court users with access to higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities. NICTS has not identified any compelling evidence which indicates that the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates business to alternative courthouse venues since March 2020 has had a detrimental impact on access to justice from a service delivery perspective.
Increased travel requirements	NICTS accepts that the reallocation of business from

(in cost and time) due to the closure would have a negative impact on court users in a largely rural area, with specific comments regarding impacts on the PSNI, individuals subject to probation supervision, the elderly, those with mobility constraints, those with a disability or health condition, those with caring responsibilities, those on low incomes, those with limited access to a private vehicle; as well as the impact during the winter months	Limavady to Coleraine results in increased travel for the majority of Adult Magistrates Court users in the Limavady area for both driven journeys and public transport journeys. As detailed in the Consultation Paper, Rural Needs Impact Assessment, Equality Screening and Travel Impact Assessment, taking the impacts and mitigations into account, NICTS considers that that the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine is justified by the legitimate aim of implementing the NICTS Estate Strategy and providing Limavady court users with access to higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities.
Suggestion for relocation of Limavady Court to an alternative public building in Limavady, such as the local police station	During pre-consultation engagement, NICTS was asked to consider the feasibility of locating a Courthouse within Limavady Police Station to deal with Adult Magistrates cases. NICTS subsequently engaged with PSNI and justice sector partners regarding this suggestion. While there are space and facilities available, capital investment would be required to reconfigure the available space to accommodate court operations. Due to the low and decreasing business volumes in Limavady, investment in an alternative venue within the town would be extremely difficult to justify given the long-standing budgetary constraints faced by the Department. In addition, concerns were raised in relation to the perceptions of a co-location including for a defendant and their legal representatives and the negative impact that court attendance within a PSNI station could have upon victims and witnesses. Based on these considerations, NICTS considers that the

	relocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates business to Limavady Police Station is not feasible.
Concerns and suggestions about the future use of the property, to support local community needs, maximise public value and provide sufficient occupation to support buildings ongoing care.	Throughout the consultation process, and during pre-consultation engagement with key stakeholders, the Department has facilitated meaningful engagement with local representatives and the wider community. The consultation question about potential future use of the building received the highest number of comment responses, indicating a keen interest in repurposing the building for the benefit of the citizens of Limavady. The disposal of Limavady Courthouse would be managed according to the NICS policy on the Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland, which provides opportunities for disposal through three identifiable pathways in the following order: 1. Internal Market Public Sector Circulation 2. Internal Market Community Asset Transfer Circulation 3. External Market. The community asset transfer of a surplus building can have a positive impact on a local area, both from a social and economic perspective, as demonstrated through the disposal of Bangor Courthouse. The pre-consultation engagement and public consultation process provided early notification of a potential opportunity for acquisition by another party who may be interested in bringing the building back into public use. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has responsibility for planning functions including the preparation of the Local Development Plan and deciding planning applications in the borough. The 2024 review of the Limavady Masterplan welcomed community-led proposals for ensuring the long-term use of the courthouse.

Concern about the potential loss or deterioration of the heritage value and character of the property	NICTS will continue to maintain Limavady Courthouse while it retains ownership of the building. Disposal of Limavady Courthouse will provide an opportunity for a new owner to invest in the building and bring it back into active use. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has responsibility for planning functions including the preparation of the Local Development Plan and deciding planning applications in the borough.
Suggestion to retain the courthouse, including a concern about loss of economic benefit to town for hospitality, retail services and professional services for those attending court	Due to the low and decreasing business volumes in Limavady, the courthouse was only used for one day a week prior to the temporary closure in 2020, bringing limited economic benefit to the town. Disposal of Limavady Courthouse will provide an opportunity for a new owner to invest in the building and bring it back into active use, which has the potential to deliver a range of benefits for the town.
Suggestion that a Rural Impact Assessment would be required	A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and it was published online throughout the consultation period alongside the Consultation Paper. As detailed in the Consultation Paper, Rural Needs Impact Assessment, Equality Screening and Travel Impact Assessment, taking the impacts and mitigations into account, NICTS considers that that the reallocation of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business to Coleraine is justified by the legitimate aim of implementing the NICTS Estate Strategy and providing Limavady court users with access to higher quality, safer, more modern and more accessible courthouse facilities.
Suggestion for NICTS to continue to work collaboratively with justice partners to monitor and	The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an Agency of the Department of Justice (DoJ). In support of DoJ's Mission of "working in partnership to create a fair, just and safe community where we respect the law and

mitigate any emerging issues relating to attendance, accessibility and engagement with court processes.	each other”, NICTS has three overarching Aims: Working in Partnership; Supporting the Judiciary; Modernising Courts and Tribunals. As such, NICTS will continue to work with justice partners on the issues raised, including through the travel impact mitigations outlined in the consultation papers.
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Conclusion and next steps

Following the Justice Minister's decision to permanently close Limavady Courthouse, NICTS will initiate the disposal of Limavady Courthouse according to the policy on the Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland which provides opportunities for disposal through three identifiable pathways in the following order:

1. Internal Market Public Sector Circulation
2. Internal Market Community Asset Transfer Circulation
3. External Market

NICTS will continue to maintain Limavady Courthouse while it retains ownership of the building.

There will be no change to the current operational arrangement of the separate listing of Limavady Adult Magistrates Court business in Coleraine Courthouse.