



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice

Sir Robert Neill MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
Sent by email to: bob.neill.mp@parliament.uk

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Dear Bob,

ADDITIONAL COURTS AND TRIBUNALS CAPACITY: NIGHTINGALE COURT SITES

I am writing to let you know that I have formally approved ten sites for use as part of HM Courts and Tribunals Service's (HMCTS) Additional Courts and Tribunals Capacity programme. You may have seen this work referred to elsewhere as 'Nightingale' or 'Blackstone' courts.

As you will be aware, the recent Covid-19 pandemic has put a great deal of pressure on the courts and tribunals system. Despite positive and rapid progress to undertake more proceedings remotely, and to re-open most of the HMCTS estate in accordance with current public health guidance, it remains the case that additional physical space is needed to enable more hearings and trials to go ahead.

The Additional Courts and Tribunals Capacity programme is identifying a range of venues that could be used to supplement the existing courts and tribunals estate. This includes any closed courts which are still owned by HMCTS, suitable local government estate, venues that can be hired for private use, and temporary constructions within existing HMCTS estate. The programme is working closely with the judiciary to establish the requirements that a new site must meet in order to be useable.

I should make clear that these sites will not be set up as new or re-opened courts but used as 'satellite' or 'annex' hearing centres of a nearby court, with hearings listed into them on a temporary basis, as a direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic. HMCTS is working at pace to open these sites, with the first due to open in July and the rest throughout August, and we will regularly review the need for each site's continued use.

An announcement is due to be made imminently on ten of these sites, which are: former court building at Telford (Annex for the Telford Justice Centre), Shropshire; former court building at Fleetwood (Annex for Blackpool Magistrates' Court), Lancashire; Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage; Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea; Cloth Hall Court, Leeds; Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside; East Pallant House, Chichester; 102 Petty France, Central London; Prospero House, Central London; The Knights' Chamber and Visitor Centre, Peterborough. Letters have also been sent to David Lammy, Shadow Secretary of State for Justice and to MPs in whose constituencies these sites are located.

I trust this is a helpful update. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours ever,

Robert Buckland

RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP